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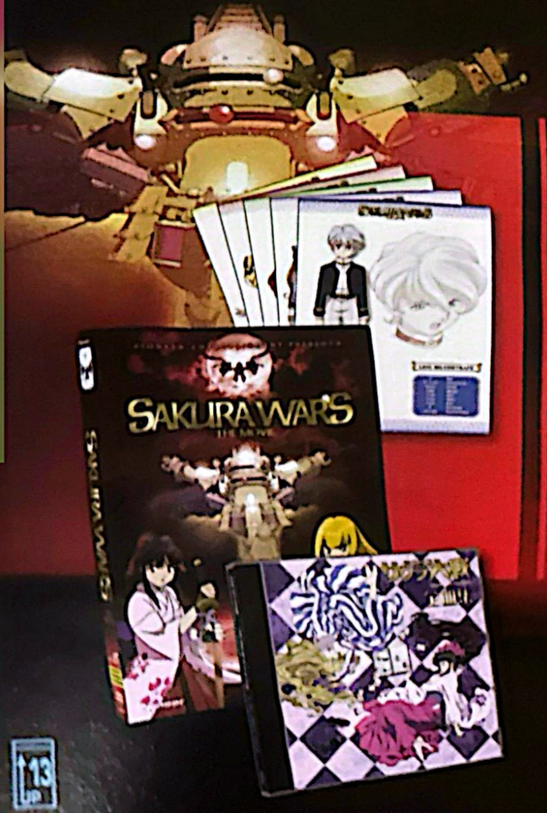

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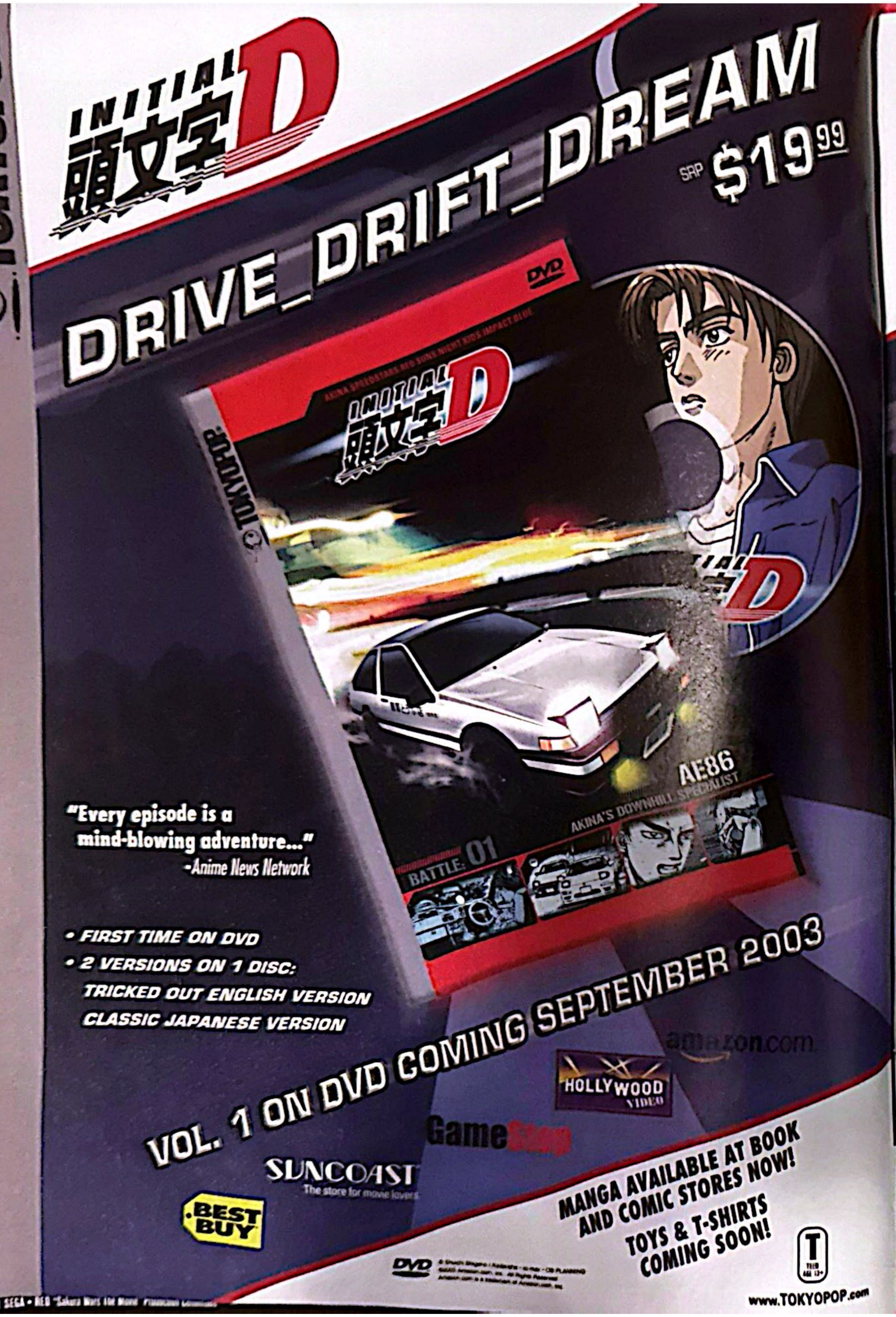

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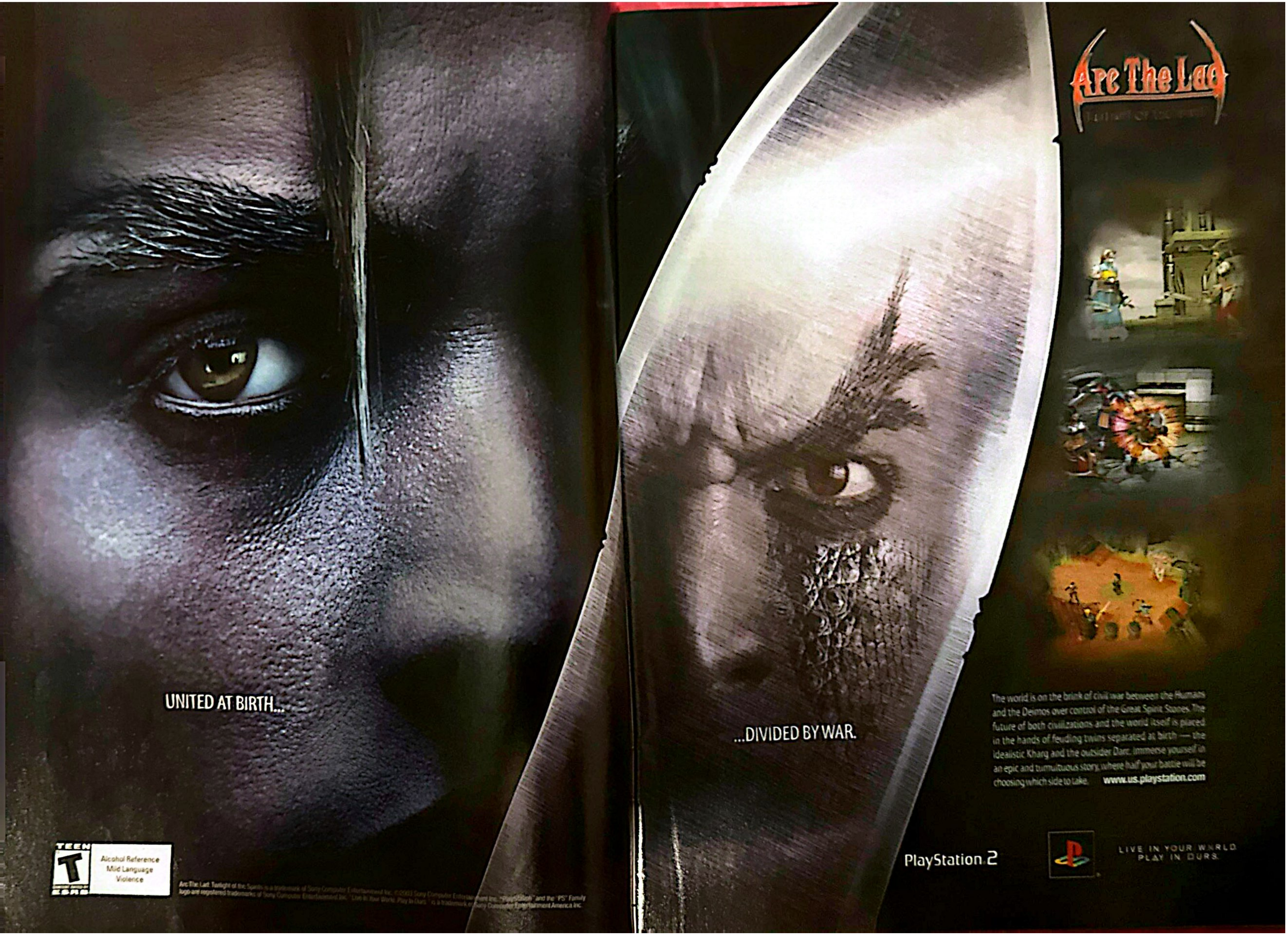
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***Yu-Gi-Oh!*'s Yugi is up for all-new TV adventures this fall on page 68, courtesy of 4Kids Entertainment, while *Witch Hunter Robin* is already scared of her show's episode guide on page 48, thanks to Bandai Entertainment.**

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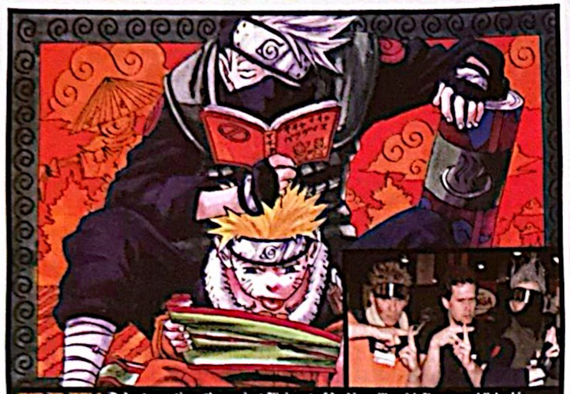
FROM THE TOP

THE ART OF NOT BEING SEEN



NINJA POLL Robert practices the ancient Ninja art of looking silly with Naruto and Kakashi (actually Max Campbell and Jordan Hoskins of Farmington, NM) at Anime Expo 2003.

Like ninjas, some anime remains unseen.

Which is a shame. At this year's Anime Expo in Anaheim, CA, the fans' most favorite series had to be *Naruto*, the incredible tale of a demon fox who was transformed into an innocent yet cocky kid being trained as a ninja (whose manga is currently serialized in the popular *Shonen Jump*). So at the show there were *Naruto* toys, posters, figurines, and pencil boards for sale while folks in attendance dressed as the characters.

So why do I have to go to Japan to watch the anime?!

Well, the good news is the *Naruto* anime will probably come to America eventually; it's too good and TV-friendly to be ignored. But the bad news is that *Naruto* is just one of many anime series that America hasn't gotten yet. Old series, like *Doraemon*, which has been delighting Japan for decades; brand new series like *Macross Zero*, the prequel to Macross (a.k.a the first hunk of *Robotech*); and truly amazing shows like *One Piece* which took the throne of anime in Japan vacated by *Dragon Ball Z*—all are sitting on the other side of the Pacific.

The reasons why are many. But we didn't think that should stop you from knowing about them, and salivating for their American release. Hence our Top Ten Anime You Can't See feature, on page 32. We really don't mean for it to get you mad because you can't watch these series yet, if only because they'll all probably get over here eventually.

Don't believe me? Listen: when *FLCL* can get on Cartoon Network and the uncut *Sailor Moon* is just a trip to Suncoast away, there really are no boundaries. Just speedbumps.

Robert Bricken
Managing Editor

MASTHEAD

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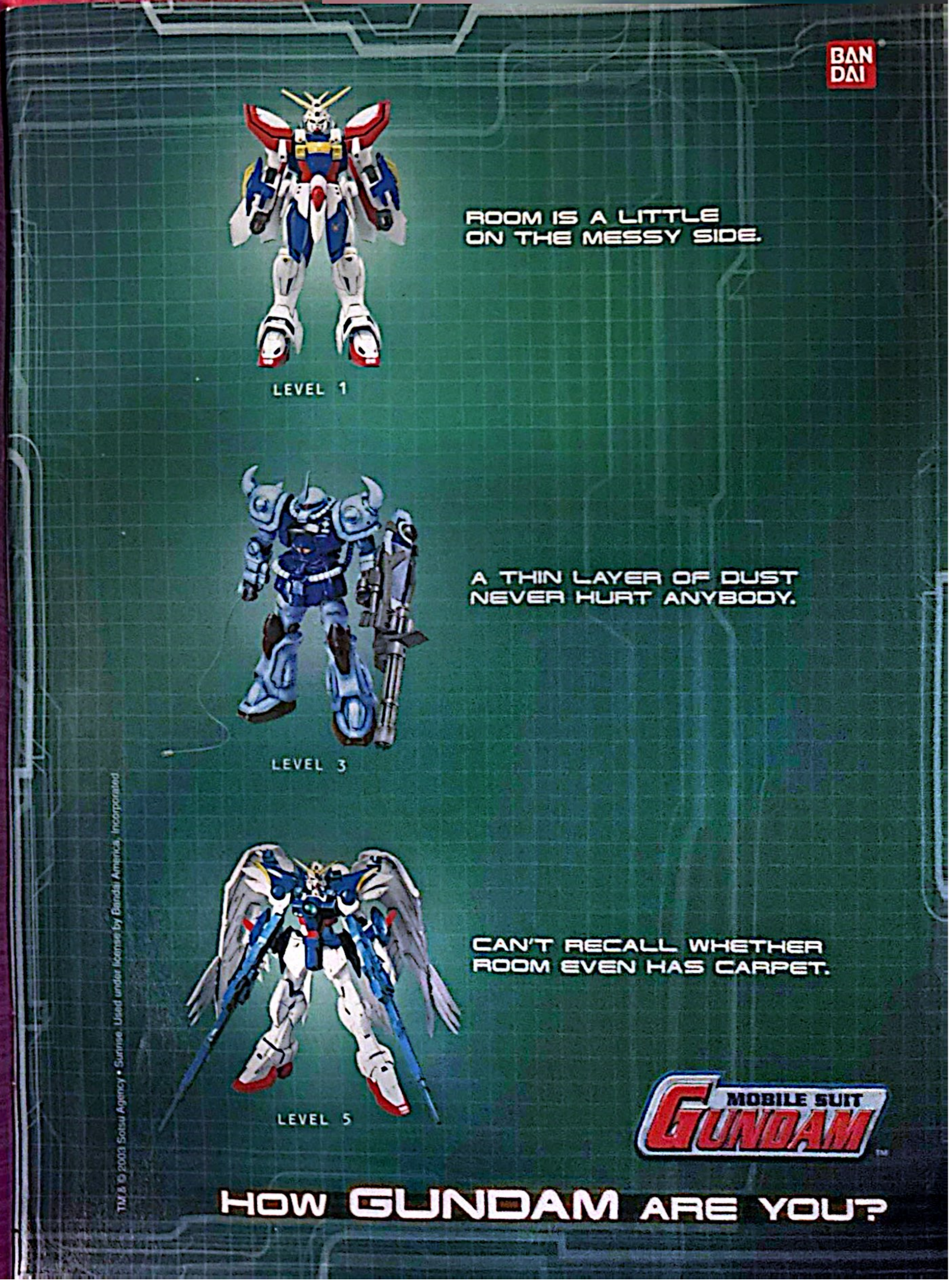
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ANIMAIL!

YOU'RE FANS, YOUR MAIL

What does it mean to be an anime fan? Judging by the mail I get, it doesn't just mean watching anime. It doesn't even mean reading the accompanying manga or buying all the officially licensed products. Nope, real hardcore anime fans go above and beyond to express their love. We're talking tattoos! We're talking painting anime on cars! This issue, we hear from folks on both those topics. And if you've found a way to express your anime love in a new and exciting way, be sure to let us know! I'd love to hear from someone who, say, painted a full-size EVA on the side of a grain elevator or something.

SEND MORE COOKIES.
US MAIL

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I want to put an anime picture on my car. Do I have to worry about the copyright? Do I have to pay to have the picture on my car?

My sister is going to put the picture on the car for me. I just don't want to pay any copyright fees.

Jedidiah Zborek
Delphi, IN

P.S. What would be a good picture to put on my car?

I think it would be very, very funny if your sister was charging you a "copyright fee" to paint a picture on your car. But I assume you're actually worried about the anime company coming down on you for using their property without permission.

As long as you're not gaining financially, you're on pretty safe ground. If you paint a Pikachu on the hood of your 1984 Camaro to impress high school girls (it won't work—from one who knows), Nintendo's not going to mess with you. But if you paint Pikachu on the side of your ice cream truck to sell more ice cream to kids, Nintendo has a problem with that.

Here's a high-concept idea: turn your car into Tetsuo from the final scenes of Akira! You could paint the whole car a mottled, fleshy color and put a big Tetsuo face on the hood. Maybe have random pipes jutting out all over. Your parents would love it!

I'LL BLAST YOU INTO OBLIVION!
I'LL WRITE YOU A STERN E-MAIL!

MEGAMAN: NT WARRIOR

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

In *MegaMan NT Warrior*, what does the *NT* stand for?

Bradley Pallone
Marietta, GA

According to Leigh Woodward, publicist for Kids' WB!, "The 'NT' stands for 'Network Transmission.'" Astute MegaMan fans should recognize that title from the new video game MegaMan Network Transmission—wherein MegaMan isn't a robot as usual, but a computer program designed to hunt viruses.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I've watched the series *His and Her Circumstances* (a.k.a. *Kare Kano*) a couple times, and each time the ending leaves me totally disappointed and confused. It's almost like it doesn't have an ending! Is there any hope for more *Kare Kano* after episode 26? Please say there is!

Laura Robinson
via cyberspace

Well, yes and no. The anime series did end with episode 26, which is a normal TV season in Japan. Director Hideaki Anno—yep, the Evangelion guy—moved on to other shows, so don't hold your breath for more His and Her Circumstances anime. Unlike on-air TV shows like The Big O 2 and Ultimate Muscle, which are suddenly getting new sequels, His & Hers doesn't have the mass popularity that will practically force the Japanese creators to make more.

However, the manga continues well past the end of the anime, and it's currently being put out by TOKYOPOP. You'll have to pick it up if you're really interested in how the story progresses.

HIS & HER CIRCUMSTANCES'S ARIMA & MIYAZAWA

ANIME INSIDER,

I'm 16 years old. Do you think you can help me find a tall Japanese guy around 16-17 years old that kind of looks like Tenchi from *Tenchi Muyo*?

Siri Schloss
Fort Washington, MD

Oh, totally! I know a guy who's perfect for you! He's my next-door neighbor. He isn't Japanese exactly, but he's almost Japanese! He's Irish. And he looks just like Tenchi, if Tenchi was maybe six inches shorter and maybe, I dunno, 150 or 200 pounds heavier. He's not exactly 16 or 17, but he never technically got above the 10th grade, so...I think we have a love connection here! I'll give him your number the next time he comes over to fix the toilet.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

Not to sound condescending towards a fellow anime fan, but Max from San Jose [see *AI* #8] needs to join the 21st century and come to the realization that DVD is the medium of choice for anime today.

How on earth can anyone hate a medium that provides better picture, better sound, choice of languages (thus eliminating the longtime debate of dubbing vs. subtitles), and loads of extra goodies like previews, production sketches, voice actor interviews and more? To actually think the way Max and his friends do is flat out mystifying!

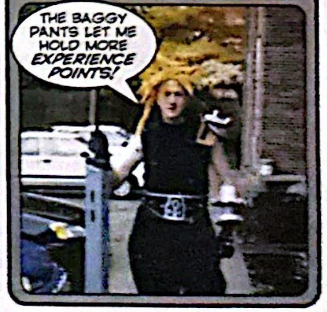
When DVDs first came out, I wasted no time replacing my antiquated VHS tapes. Gone are the days of rewinding tapes, worrying about them wearing out or breaking, and

COSPLAY CAVALCADE

CLOUD STRIFE

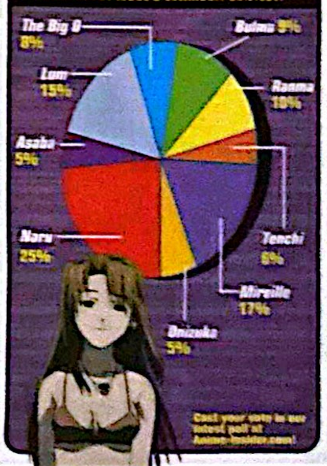
BY CHRIS OLSEN

In *Final Fantasy VII*, hero Cloud Strife wields two big, pointy things: his gargantuan Buster sword, and his hair. The Omaha, NE-dwelling Mr. Olsen has replicated both of them, down to the pixel—thank goodness he sent us this snapshot just before he went off the breed chocobos for 20 hours. Wanna join the Cavalcade? Then just send your pictures to *Anime Insider*. Tell us how you make 'em!


THE BAGGY PANTS LET ME HOLD MORE EXPERIENCE POINTS!

WEBPOLL

WHO WON LAST ISSUE'S SWIMSUIT CONTEST?



Cast your vote in our latest poll at Anime-Insider.com!

OTAKU'S BLACK BOOK

HEY, ANIME FREAKS!
Like a series? Hate a character? Just have something to say? Then write your favorite anime company and let 'em know what you've been thinking. Send your thoughts to the following addresses, and be sure to tell 'em that Anime Insider sent you. Power to the people!

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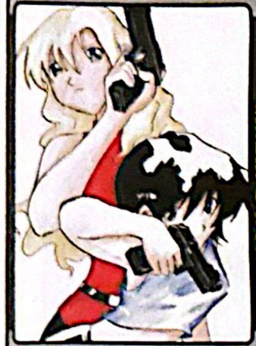

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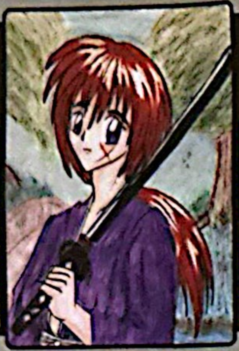

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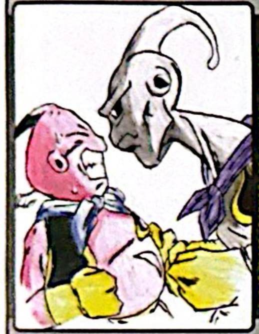

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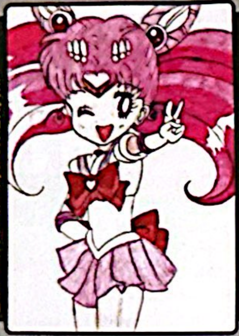

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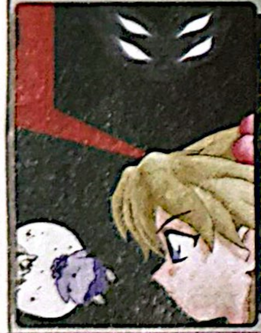

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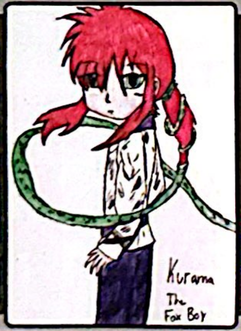

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most importantly, DVDs take up only a fraction of the storage space of bulky tapes.

Bottom line: VHS is literally last century's technology and companies like ADV Films would be foolishly wasting money and resources putting out anime on tape to satisfy what I believe is a steadily shrinking minority of people. The future is here and now, and it's on a shiny little disc!

Jeffrey C. Branch
Philadelphia, PA

Obviously, in terms of sales, the majority agrees with Jeffrey. But I still get a few letters from VHS supporters. In their defense, there is nothing more depressing than buying half an anime series on VHS cassette only to have a company switch to DVDs on you.

But I do love those extras. Almost as much as shiny little objects.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I was hoping you could answer a few puzzling questions for me. Firstly, I was wondering how many *Lupin III* episodes/OVAs/movies/specials were made. Also, I was wondering the same for *Rurouni Kenshin/Samurai X*. I see both series all over the place and it's confusing as to what's what.

Dino Mastrianni
Jupiter, FL

Okay, let's see here. There were three Lupin TV series. The first series was 23 episodes, the second was 155 episodes, and the third was 50 episodes. So that's 228 TV episodes. Whew! There were also 14 TV specials, eight theatrical releases and one OVA (original video animation). That's a lotta Lupin.

Rurouni Kenshin is comprised of 95 TV episodes, six OVA episodes and one movie.

By the way, some people say "OAV" in place of "OVA," but we don't. It means the same thing, for the record.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I am a young artist and I would like to learn to speak Japanese. I really want to go to Japan and start a career in anime. I was

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NEW Anime Series!
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WORDS FOR THE WISE

WHAT ARE ALL THESE PEOPLE BLATHERING ABOUT?

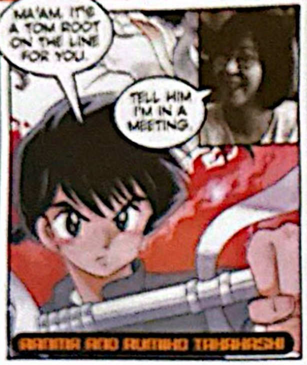
GASHAPON—[GA-sha-pohn] Little toys and goodies dispensed from vending machines; it's an onomonopoeic name derived from the clanking "gasha!" sound the machines make when you crank out the toys.
HENTAI—[HEN-tie] Japanese for "pervert" or "perverted." Refers to naughty anime and manga too.
IMOUTO—[EE-moh-toh] Younger sister. Usually followed by an honorific suffix such as "-chan."
KATAKANA—[KAH-tah-kah-nah] One of the two common Japanese "alphabets" (actually sets of syllables). Katakana are reserved for foreign "loanwords," words imported from other languages. (Japanese for "computer"? "Kompyuutaa." Get it?)
MANGA—[MAHN-gah] Japanese comic books.
MANGA-KA—[MAHN-ga KA] Japanese word for creator of manga.
ONEE—[oh-NAY] Older sister. Usually followed by an honorific.
OTAKU—[o-TAH-koo] Hardcore anime fan. If you have a tattoo, you probably are one.
SHÔNEN—[SHO-nehn] An adjective meaning "for boys." Shônen manga, shônen anime, etc. Shôjo is the equivalent "for girls."

CULTURE SHOCKER

WHY THE JAPANESE DO THOSE WEIRD THINGS THEY DO

[illegible]

Since plenty of folks die in anime, cemetery visits aren't uncommon—but those folks paying their respects aren't trying to start fires, they're lighting sticks of incense. Incense is a major way of honoring the dead according to Buddhism, so people visiting the cemetery memorial markers always light sticks of incense on anniversaries and holidays like Obon, the Buddhist festival of honoring ancestors.


MA'AM, IT'S A TOM ROOT ON THE LINE FOR YOU.
TELL HIM I'M IN A MEETING.

RANMA AND RUMIKO TAKAHASHI

wondering if you could put in a good word for me with Rumiko Takahashi.

Jace Moore
Clarksville, TN

I imagine that conversation going something like this...
Rumiko Takahashi: Hello?
Me: Hey, what's up, Rumiko baby?
RT: Who the hell is this?
Me: It's Tom Root from Anime Insider.
RT: Oh, I love that magazine. Although I think that Rob Bricken guy owes me some money for his Lum tattoo.
Me: Uh, yeah. Anyway, I just wanted to put in a good word for Jace Moore from Clarksville, Tennessee, who wants a career in anime someday.
RT: That's very vague.
Me: Yep. But enough about him, remember that one scene in Ranma 1/2 where—
RT: Oh gosh, look at the time! My phone bill's going to be sky-high! Gotta run...
Me: But I called you!
RT: Click!
Me: Aw, she hung up.
RT: No, I just said "click!"
Me: Weird.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

Back in AI #5, there was a question from a young lady regarding the propriety of females choosing to have shôjo anime/manga characters applied to their skin. Speaking as a female with a lovely Sailor Moon tattoo on my upper arm, I'd just like offer some tips.

1) *Always* investigate the tattoo parlor first! Make sure it is clean and reputable. Be sure the artist uses new needles for each customer.
2) Check out several artists to see which one will do the best job on your tattoo. All artists have different styles and skill levels. An artist may be great at abstract form, but may not be very good at fine line work. Shop around!
3) If you have a low threshold for pain, skip it! If you have any doubts whatsoever, skip it! Remember, tattoos are forever, and once the needle goes in, there's no turning back!

Pamela Shelley
Chatsworth, CA

Wise words! Another tip is to never, ever get a tattoo when you're inebriated. Otherwise you could end up like me, having a tattoo of Subway spokesman Jared on your arm.

And on that note, it couldn't be a better time to say sayonara. I'll catch y'all next issue. Keep those letters, drawings and "Last Man Standing" suggestions coming! I read 'em all!

—Tom Root

Every day is a brand new adventure for Tomtaro and his pals, the Tom-Tom Friends! Weekdays on Cartoon Network! Oopsa!

Send yer letters to:
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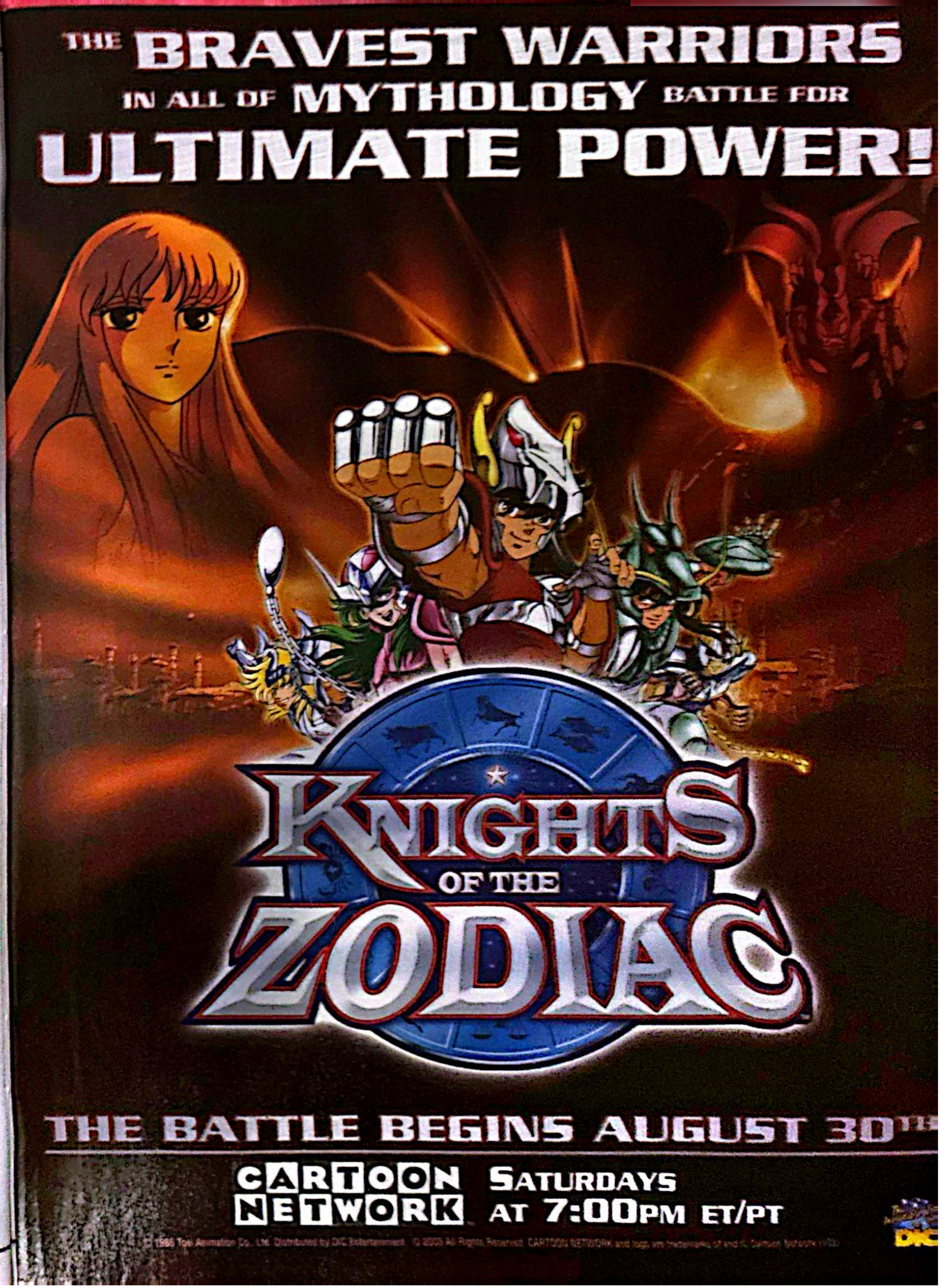
or e-mail to
AnimeInsider@aol.com


THE BRAVEST WARRIORS IN ALL OF MYTHOLOGY BATTLE FOR ULTIMATE POWER!
KNIGHTS OF THE ZODIAC
THE BATTLE BEGINS AUGUST 30TH
CARTOON NETWORK
SATURDAYS AT 7:00PM ET/PT
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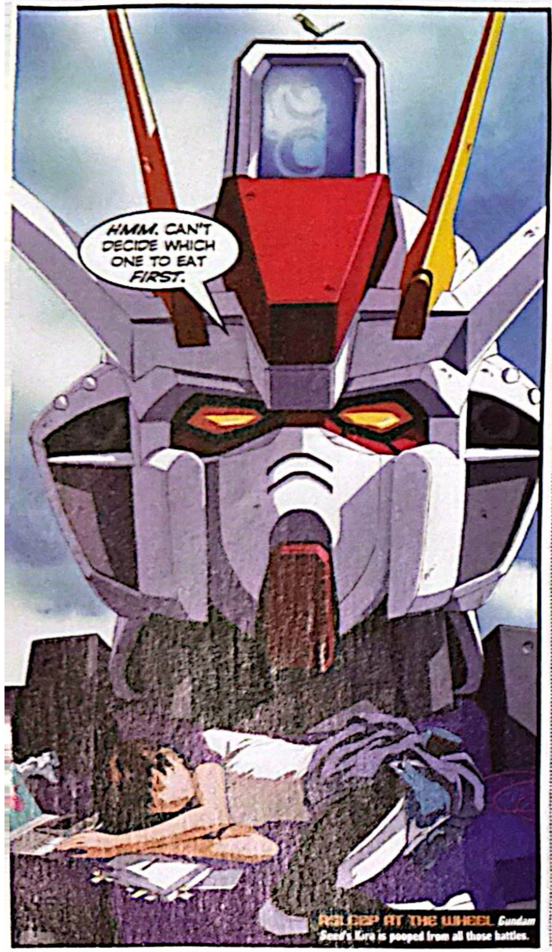
INSIDER NEWS+NOTES

LICENSED TO THRILL

The Top 5 Anime You'll Be Watching…Next Year


HMM. CAN'T DECIDE WHICH ONE TO EAT FIRST.

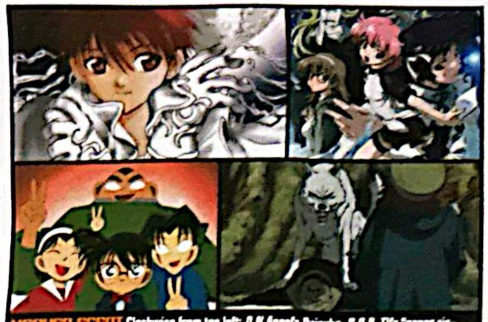
ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL *Gundam Seed*'s Kira is pooped from all those battles.

Ah, summer. The time when anime fans think about…*next* summer.

As any anime fan will tell you, the 2003 summer cons weren't just great places to hang out, they're also when the industry revealed their license acquisitions for 2004 (yeah, that's as specific as they got). We've measured the amount of drool collected by each announcement, and present the five most saliva-producing series, in alphabetical order.

D.N.ANGEL (ADV Films)
Yukiru Sugisaki's *D.N.Angel* revolves around the life of one seriously troubled youth named Daisuke. His problem: on his 14th birthday, Daisuke's parents reveal that he's the reincarnation of the legendary master-thief, Dark, and that it's his destiny to steal the world's most valuable treasures. To make matters worse, the love of his life hardly notices that he exists, but she is in love with Dark. Then a rival angel named Light arrives who's determined to capture him, and Daisuke's problems only get worse. "We're very excited about *D.N.Angel*—it's a strong title, already very popular in Japan and with excellent stateside buzz," said ADV spokesperson Andrew Nelson.

DETECTIVE CONAN (FUNimation)
Shinichi Kudo was a teen detective, but during a case some thugs forced him to drink a chemical that turned him back into a kid! Now, while hiding the truth from his girlfriend (hence his new name Conan—as in Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes), he solves mysteries, murders and mayhem as a little kid. Luckily, he's got gear—including a rocket skateboard, a hi-tech soccer ball for disabling crooks, and a bowtie that lets him duplicate any voice. "*Detective Conan* is a series with great content, tremendous storyline and intriguing characters," said FUNimation president Gen Fukunaga. "It's a blockbuster property in Japan and we expect the same in the United States." He's not wrong to think so—with over 250 episodes and several movies, Gosho Aoyama's *Conan* has been airing continuously in Japan since 1996! But Conan's potential might be diminished if networks can't deal with all the guns and actual murder—Fox passed on the series for being too violent. So the mystery now is how big a hit will *Detective Conan* be?



HEAVEN SCENT Clockwise from top left: *D.N.Angel*'s Daisuke, *R.O.D. TV*'s "paper sisters," one of *Wolf's Rain*'s touching moments and Detective Conan and his posse.

GUNDAM SEED (Bandai Entertainment)
Do not doubt: *Gundam Seed* rules Japan. And there's a damn good reason according to Jerry Chu, marketing manager for Bandai: "*Gundam Seed* seamlessly blends the deep plots and themes found in the original *Gundam* series with a new edgy look combined with awesome mecha designs reminiscent of *Gundam Wing*." Set in an alternate universe, Kira Yamato has fallen into the middle of war between Earth and the space colonies, and right into the cockpit of a new super-weapon called a Gundam. The bad part is the rebellious space colonists have stolen four other Gundams—and one of those pilots is his best friend Athrun Zala. Directed by Mitsuo Fukuda, there's lots of angst, plenty of *Gundam*-esque meditations on war, but done with the coolest Gundam designs and fights since…well, ever.

R.O.D. TV (Pioneer Animation)
Japan had the same problem with the *Read Or Die* OVA series (distributed by Manga Entertainment) America did—it was too short. Japan's solution: the *R.O.D.* TV series, directed by Koji Masunari, who also handled the OVA, and written by original creator Hideyuki Kurata. It hasn't even aired in Japan yet, but Pioneer knew anime gold when it saw conceptual sketches of it! The new show focuses on three lovely new members of the British Library, each with the same paper-controlling powers as the OVA series' beloved heroine Yomiko Readman. Meanwhile, the TV series looks to retain the incredible action, amazing music and high production values that made the original such a huge success.

WOLF'S RAIN (Bandai Entertainment)
In a bleak future, wolves have been hunted nearly to extinction, but have learned to live among humans in disguise. Legend says that only the wolves can find paradise and escape the endless war-torn wasteland, but they'll need the help of the Moon Flower, Cheza, to find it. Hooked yet? Well, what if we tell you that it was done by all the same folks who rocked us all with *Cowboy Bebop*? "We're simply ecstatic to be bringing a title of such high caliber to North America," said Jerry Chu. Check out our in-depth profile on page 62 to find out why *Wolf's Rain* will have you hungry like the wolf (sorry…) for more! ■ Zac Bertschy

LATTER BUT NOT LEAST

THE LICENSING SCORECARD FOR 2004

ADV FILMS
AZUMANGA DAIOH MOVIE The theatrical antics of Chiyo-chan, Osaka and the rest of the *Azumanga* crew.
GRAVION One of last year's hottest giant mecha action shows, complete with an army of cute girls!
KINO'S JOURNEY A quiet, understated series about a boy who travels with his talking motorcycle.
MAHOU YUUGI The whacked-out story of a girl, her magical fish costume, and the particularly insane world she inhabits.
NURSE WITCH KOMUGIO-CHAN A bizarre spin-off of the series *Soul Taker* featuring the heroine as a magical girl.
RAHXEPHON MOVIE A retelling of the original *RahXephon* story, this time with the focus on the romance between Ayato and Mishima, with a new song by Maya Sakamoto.
SLAYERS PREMIUM The final adventure with sorceress Lina Inverse and her pals. Look for a cameo from Naga the White Serpent!

AN ENTERTAINMENT
MIAMI GUNS Girls with guns and other "assets" fight crime and parody everything on the planet.

BANDAI
GUNDAM F91 Set 30 years after the original *Gundam*, a faction called the Crossbones Vanguard attacks the space colonies.
.hack//DUSK A.k.a. *Legend of the Twilight Bracelet*. Kids inherit the player characters from the .hack videogame series, including Kite.
STRATOS 4 In the future, underage girls must train to fly fighter jets and defend our civilization, natch.
TENSHI NO SHIPPO One boy and too many hot women. As usual.
ZETA GUNDAM In-between the original *Gundam* and *Char's Counterattack*, Amuro Ray and Char must team up when the Earth Federation grows too corrupt.

ZETA GUNDAM

CENTRAL PARK MEDIA
WORLD OF NARUE Boy discovers girl is a half-alien. Romantic, sci-fi comedy ensues.

PIONEER
GUNGRAVE Based on the videogame by *Trigun*'s Yasuhiro Nightow, Vash fans will not be disappointed.
SAMURAI CHAMPLOO *Cowboy Bebop* director Shinichiro Watanabe's newest series. It hasn't even started in Japan yet.
TEXHNOLYZE *Haibane Renmei* creator yoshitoshi ABe makes his most cracked-out series ever.

TOKYOPOP
RAVE MASTER Swords, magic, an odd snowman/dog/thing and a hip-hop feel. Due on Cartoon Network in 2004. ■ ZB

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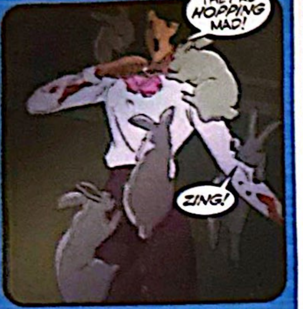
DEATH OF THE MONTH

ALICE'S FAMILY FROM 'PET SHOP OF HORRORS'


THEY'RE HOPPING MAD!
ZING!

Young Alice's parents were inconsolable when she died. Happily, they found a magic pet shop in Chinatown with animals of all kinds—including a special breed of rabbit that looks and sounds just like their dead daughter (yes, you read that right). Count D, the owner, sells them the rabbit, telling the parents to feed "Alice" only veggies. It's not long before they ignore his advice, feeding her candy. Alice becomes a crazed animal, addicted to sugar, and attacks her parents. Suddenly, a litter of baby human Alices eats their way out of her stomach, and they begin multiplying, filling the entire house with crazed, carnivorous baby girls. The babies attack Alice's mother and kill her father, but are subdued by Count D. Moral: don't ever buy a rabbit. ■ Miguel A.E. Batita

RISING FUN

WHAT RULES JAPAN RIGHT THIS MINUTE

AZUMI

THEATERS Yu Koyama's popular manga series *Azumi* comes to life in live-action! The story follows the orphaned Azumi and nine other sword-wielding warriors as they try to restore order to feudal Japan.

TOYS They may not be Lego, but Diablocks may be far, far better. They also recently re-released a classic 1974 *Giant Mazinger* set in commemoration of their 40th anniversary.

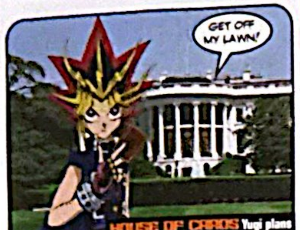
TV Studio Gonzo, which produced such anime series as *Blue Submarine No. 6* and *Vandred*, returns to TV with *Last Exile*. Slightly sepia-toned to give it a steam power kind of feel, the science fiction show is set in a world of flying "boats."

GAMES The month belongs to the Game Boy Advance, which all train-riding Japanese swear by. The Akira Toriyama-designed *Dragon Quest* (a.k.a *Dragon Warrior* in the U.S.) *Monsters: Caravan Heart*, and *Fire Emblem: Sword of Raging Fire* earned the #1 and #3 game sales spots. ■ Kumar Sivasubramanian

LAST EXILE

YUGI ON DRUGS

King of Games Helps Kids Say "No!"


GET OFF MY LAWN!

HOUSE OF CARDS Yugi plans to give G.W. a few game tips.

4Kids Entertainment's *Yu-Gi-Oh!* star Yugi Mutou has a new gig besides being the King of Games. He's been hired by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy in order to promote drug prevention among the young fans of this massively popular show.

As part of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign whose "Anti-Drug" slogans are sprouting up on billboard and ads everywhere, Yugi claims "Honor" as his "Anti-Drug."

"At the heart of this animated series are important values of character and teamwork," said 4Kids Entertainment chairman and CEO Al Kahn. "There is no room for even the consideration of drugs in Yugi's world." There is room for stickers, though—Sandylion Sticker Designs will distribute four exclusively-designed collectible stickers, available at your local Blockbuster Video.

Hopefully, kids will remain addicted only to the *Yu-Gi-Oh!* collectible card game. ■ Dillon Fort

COUNTER STRIKE!

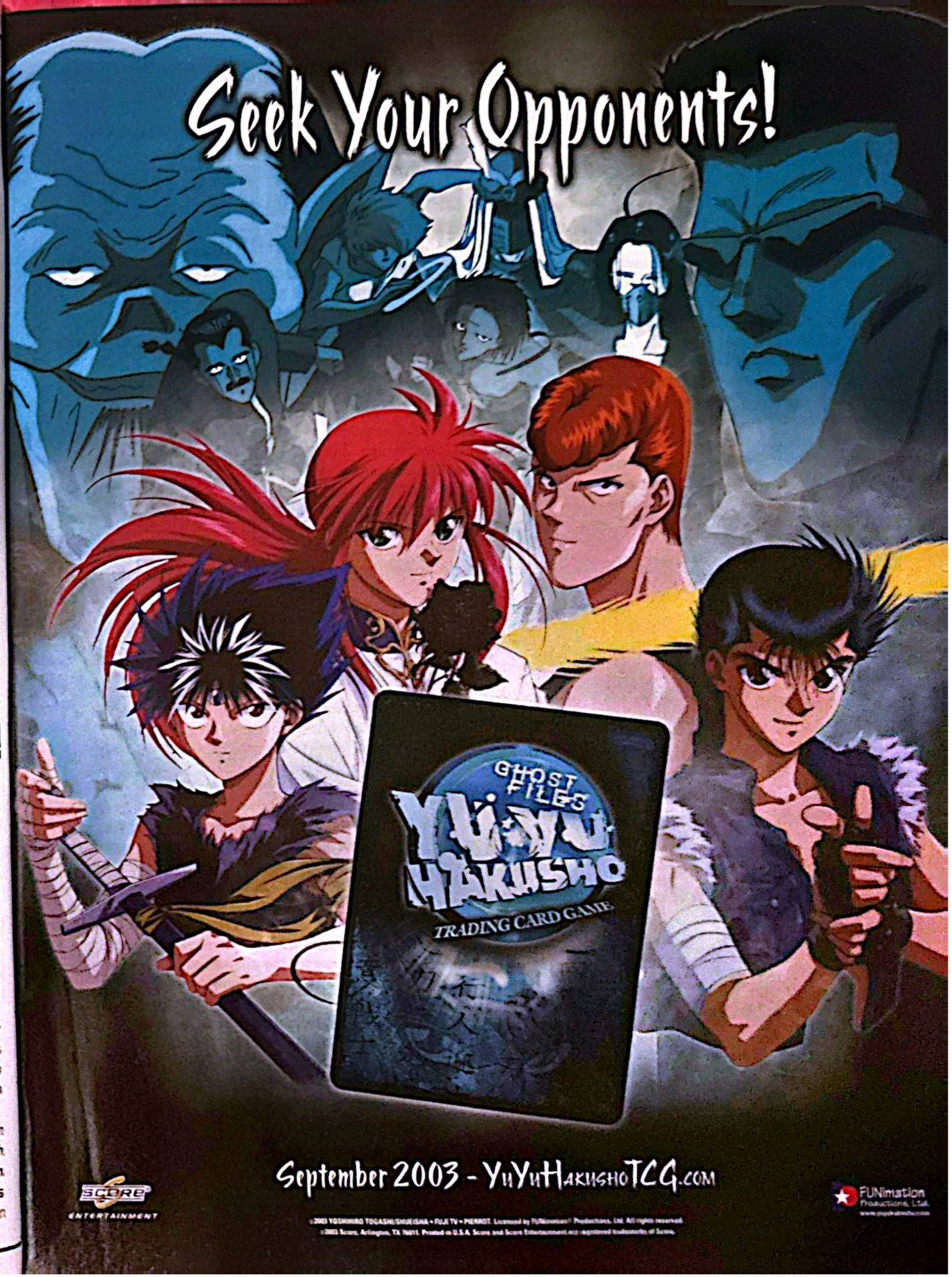
American Animation Company Takes on Japan

UNDERSTANDING CHAOS

Japan has been pumping America full of anime for years, but one company is determined to reverse the trend. Los Angeles-based Studio ArtFX has announced they will enter their animated titles into the Japanese entertainment market.

"It's always been a dream of mine to create anime in Japan for the Japanese market," said director Terrence Walker. The chance came for Walker after he saw the popularity of "indie"—or fan-made—anime titles in the video market. Their first step has been to make a Japanese language trailer to shop to Asian studios, which is available at http://www.studioartfx.com.

Studio ArtFX's titles*Understanding Chaos* and *Shadowskin* have been created using modern computer programs much like Asian "indie" titles, and are available for purchase on their website.. Hold your horses, though: TOKYOPOP plans on releasing them on DVD later this year. ■ Robert Sticken



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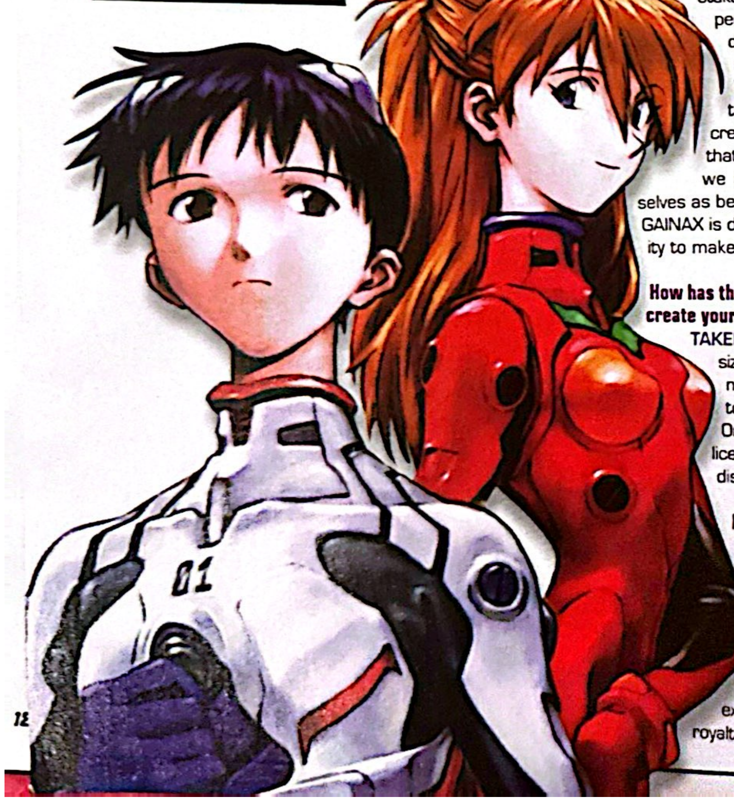
GOOD TO BE GAINAX

'Anime Insider' Interviews the Most Famous of Anime Studios

Even if by some bizarre circumstance you don't know the GAINAX studio, you know their work. GAINAX has created such critically acclaimed work such as *Wings of Honneamise* and *Nadia: Secret of Blue Water*, as well as a little show called *Neon Genesis Evangelion*—arguably the most influential anime series since *Astro Boy*.

Anime Insider had a chance to talk to director Kazuya Tsurumaki, producers Hiroyuki Yamaga and Hiroki Sato, general manager Yasuhiro Takeda and renowned character designer Yoshiyuki Sadamoto. While they declined to comment about the live-action *Evangelion* movie, *AI* still picked their brain about anime, America and why GAINAX is so darned good.



SHAKE YOUR MONEY MAKERS *Evangelion*'s Shinji and Asuka are two of many beloved GAINAX creations.

Anime Insider: How is it that all of GAINAX's projects are been critically acclaimed and/or a become fan favorites. You have to admit, it's a pretty strong record.

SATO: Thank you for thinking we're highly acclaimed [laughs]! Many of our works are already branded as GAINAX works, so in that sense, it publicly gets more attention than other titles. I don't know, I didn't really answer the question.

YAMAGA: It could be because GAINAX's strength is that we can see the work both as a viewer and as a creator. We don't just concentrate on what we want to do or just on what would make money. I think we are able to balance the two. That might be one of the reasons why.

SADAMOTO: Speaking as a character designer, I personally keep in mind that everything needs to be created for everyone, from children to the otaku market. I try to design characters that people of all ages can enjoy. It is a very difficult thing, but I'm constantly thinking about the balance.

TAKEDA: I think where GAINAX is better than Disney is that after Disney created Mickey Mouse, they created titles that belonged to other people. At GAINAX, we always create titles thinking of ourselves as being the first consumer. One thing that GAINAX is definitely lower than Disney is their ability to make money!

How has the American market influenced how you create your projects?

TAKEDA: We think about the increase in the size of the U.S. anime market at the beginning of every project now. It has mostly to do with the increase of the budget. One of the things we do think about is license for merchandising, and that is also discussed right from the beginning.

More money is a good thing, but are there any drawbacks?

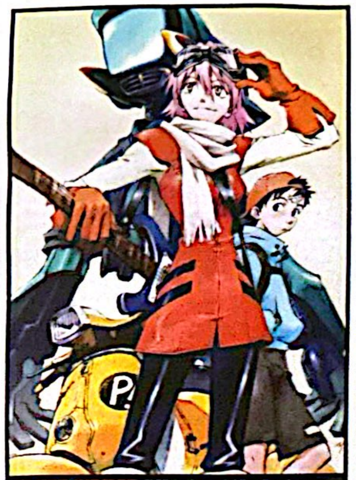
TAKEDA: There is one problem with working with foreign entities and that is that the business models between the U. S. and Japan are very different. There is one title that I won't mention the name of that is selling extremely well in the U. S., but none of the royalties have been coming to the Japanese companies because the U. S. company has used up all of the revenue for expenses. So the initial advance royalties were the only money the Japanese company got. We need the U. S. companies to start thinking about this.

It is easier for us to build a relationship with companies that already have a Japanese entity or a Japanese parent company and are already established.

Business matters aside, does the American market affect you creatively?

SATO: I was overwhelmed by the pure appreciation that the fans have in the U. S. compared to Japan. We are able to find out that compared to titles that have been made for worldwide purposes such as *Pokémon* or *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, many of the fans are looking for titles that are created by the creators on what *they* like to make. The fans here are a lot of the hardcore fans and that may be the reason why.

TAKEDA: In the creative process we don't necessarily think, "Oh, this should be done a certain way for the U. S. market." We do definitely think about the foreign market for business partner purposes like who will be handling the foreign rights for each section of the title.



GUITAR WOMAN *FLCL*'s guitar-wielding Haruko was made for a Japanese audience but became a cult favorite around the world.

TSURUMAKI: If this was 10 years ago, probably the fans would have been more into American things, but this year I've noticed that the American fans are not that different from the Japanese. Just the overall atmosphere is not that different. I feel that instead of constantly thinking about what the U. S. market wants in the creation of a title, I feel like the fans may enjoy something we create as we have always done.

How do you feel about us wacky American fans and our conventions?

YAMAGA: I've been attending American conventions for seven years. Why do I come back? Well that's because the appreciation for animation between the Japanese fans and the U. S. fans is hopefully not that different. I do enjoy the fact that the fans here enjoy anime, not necessarily our titles, but other titles as well. That brings us joy and it makes us feel that we want to work harder for another year, it heightens our feelings and creative instincts.

SADAMOTO: In general, Japan recently has started increasing the number of anime events that have an overall view of anime, that cover all anime. Events in Japan are cosplay-only, or even in the manga world, it would be publisher-based, so it's very segregated. In that sense, I think it's very good that there are events like that in the U. S.

TAKEDA: I'm very amazed at the cosplay levels here. There are cosplayers in Japan, but in this country they're known for masquerade—the skits. In Japan, cosplayers act like models, they get their pictures taken, and that's about it. But the stage we saw last night, the cosplayers were dancing, and it was definitely a form of entertainment. I would love to bring this back to Japan and see how it would work there.

Okay, time to be put on the spot. What's your favorite GAINAX title and why?

SATO: *FLCL*, because I was involved with it from the beginning to the end.

YAMAGA: *Mahoromatic*, because it was the most recent title I worked on. As a creator, I got a lot of enjoyment.

TSURUMAKI: I would like to say *FLCL*, but it is actually *Gunbuster*, because it's the anime that made me want to work for GAINAX.

SADAMOTO: For now, it's *Evangelion*, because for the last 10 years, it's what I keep telling myself to get motivated!

TAKEDA: I have two. *Wings of Honneamise*, because it was the first title by GAINAX that embodies what GAINAX is. The second is *Otaku no Video* because watching it takes me back to what it felt like in the beginning. ■ RB & Trisha L. Sebastian

VITAL STATS

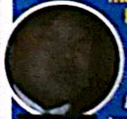
THE WHO'S WHO OF GAINAX

YAMAGA

HIROYUKI YAMAGA Co-founder of GAINAX. Wrote *Otaku No Video*, *Gunbuster*, and more; directed *Mahoromatic*, wote and directed the acclaimed *Wings of Honneamise* when just 24. Also co-produced *FLCL* and *Evangelion*.

SATO

HIROKI SATO Producer of *FLCL* and *His & Her Circumstances*.



TAKEDA

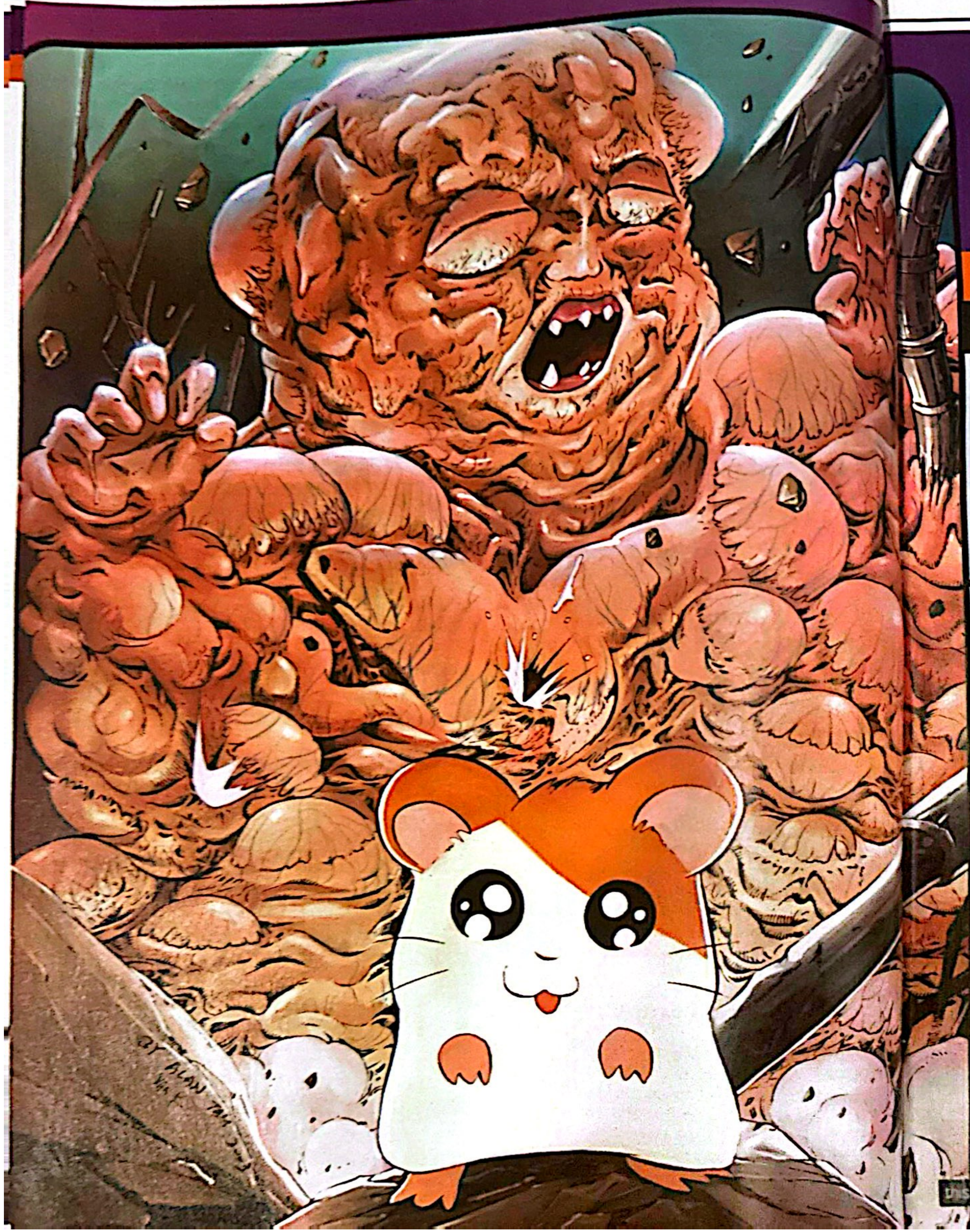
YASUHIRO TAKEDA—General Manager.

TSURUMAKI

KAZUYA TSURUMAKI—Directed *FLCL*. Wrote and directed the *End of Evangelion* movie. Storyboardist for *His & Her Circumstances*, animation director for *Nadia: Secret of Blue Water*, and was an assistant director for the *Evangelion* TV series.

SADAMOTO

YOSHIYUKI SADAMOTO—The probably best-knowa character designer in the world for his work on *FLCL*, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Wings of Honneamise* as well as Bandai's .hack saga. ■ MB



LAST MAN STANDING

A BATTLE YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SEE

TETSUO VS. HAMTARO

15	AGE	240 (in hamster years)
213' 6"	HEIGHT	5"
583 tons	WEIGHT	8 oz.
"Kanedaaaaaaaa!!"	CATCHPRASE	"Kyush-kyush!"
The Achy-Breaky	FAVORITE BOOGIE	The Ham-Ham Dance

TETSUO: Once a freewheeling member of his buddy Kaneda's motorcycle gang, Tetsuo's life takes a turn for the weirder when he is forced into a secret government program to turn children into psychic weapons. Tetsuo's new destructive powers spiral out of control, and, well—look at the picture.
HAMTARO: He's the cuddly golden hamster with a heart of gold! Hamtaro is the pet of Laura, a fifth-grader, but maintains a sizeable posse called the Ham-Ham Friends. They're always up to crazy adventures, which means that Hamtaro is no stranger to danger!

THE BATTLE BEGINS

Neo-Tokyo's Olympic Stadium is a hellstorm of fire and death as the psychotic Tetsuo continues to lose control, his body now a gigantic blob of oozing flesh. As his height and girth grow exponentially, so does the destruction all around him. Towers of steel and concrete implode and collapse.

Here comes Hamtaro, waddling along cheerfully. Wasa-wasa! It sure is a good day to be a hamster! Hamtaro happily weaves his way through the fallen bodies, excited about what the day will bring.

Tetsuo's fevered brain burns in his skull. *What's happening to me?* he thinks. He tries to blink away the hurt, daggers of agony piercing his mind. *Why is life so painful?*

Far below, Hamtaro suddenly spies Tetsuo looming above him. Could this be a new friend? "Oopaa!" Hamtaro cries, and begins scampering up the hills of swollen flesh. It's a tough climb, but anything's possible when you make it a fun game!

I'll kill them all, thinks Tetsuo, *I'll punish them all for what they*—Tetsuo's thoughts are interrupted when he finds himself suddenly face-to-face with a tiny, golden hamster. "Hamha!" says a merry Hamtaro.

Tetsuo furrows his brow. "Ham...hamha?" There is no malice in the big, dark eyes of the hamster. Only love. Tetsuo forgets his plans to murder his tormenters. "Can we be friends?" he asks the little hamster. Schmubby-wubby! Hamtaro rubs affectionately against Tetsuo's misshapen chin. Tears spring to Tetsuo's eyes, and he gasps in surprise.

Unfortunately, his gasp accidentally horks the little hamster back into his throat, and Tetsuo begins to choke on the little furball. Turning blue, Tetsuo hacks and heaves but can't dislodge the hamster. For one terrible moment, his entire body convulses, setting off waves of destruction on the streets below. Finally, the light fades from Tetsuo's eyes and his enormous mass slowly topples over, over...and lies still.

THE WINNAH:

After several moments, Hamtaro exits Tetsuo's body from a different orifice than he entered. He looks back at Tetsuo's frozen, horrified face. "Hamgoof," Hamtaro says sadly. It looks like his new friend won't be able to play after all. But suddenly the hamster cheers up—after all, he has lots of *other* friends! And off goes Hamtaro, in search of more fun! ●

Are there any colossal anime match-ups you'd like to see on these pages? Let us know at AnimeInsider@aol.com now!

this month's battle drawn by ALAN TAM and KEVIN YAN

BY TRISHA L.

A.I. FIVE

THE TOP 5 REASONS YOU'LL LOVE THIS SERIES

INITIAL D

START YOUR ENGINES, BECAUSE A NEW SPEED RACER IS HERE!

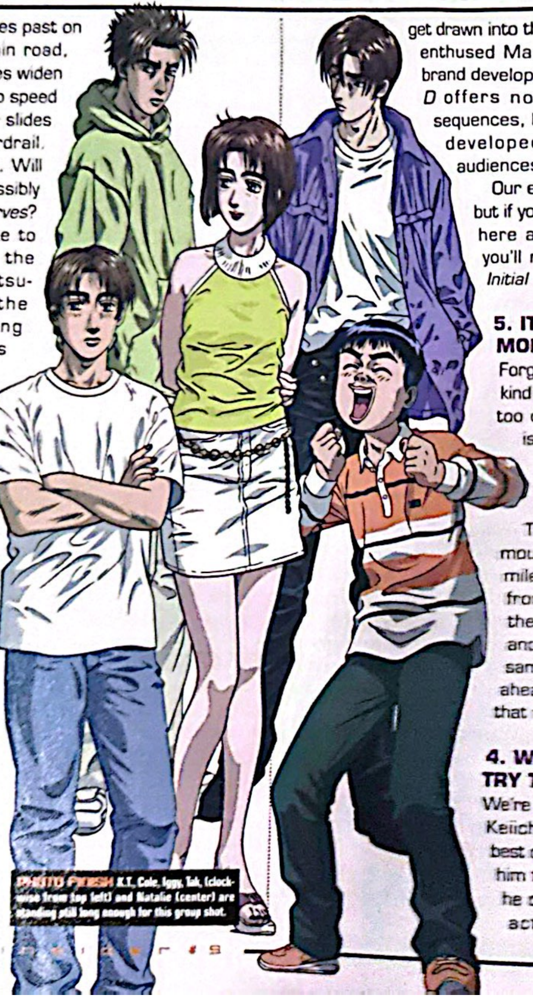


PHOTO FINISH K.T., Cole, Iggy, Tak, (clockwise from top left) and Natalie (center) are standing still long enough for this group shot.

The car flashes past on the mountain road, and your eyes widen as it picks up speed into a curve. The rear slides out towards the guardrail. It's going way too fast. Will he crash? Can he possibly survive the *next 26 curves*?

That's what it's like to drive and survive in the world of Noboru Mitsusawa's *Initial D*, the hottest sports racing anime to hit the states since *Speed Racer*.

TOKYOPOP has been publishing the manga since May 2002 but September 16 sees the DVD debut of Tak Fujiwara, the mild-mannered tofu delivery boy who doesn't realize he's the best downhill street racer in town. Nor do his friends. They just know of a legendary driver on the mountain and wonder who this great driver could be. The adventure begins when other street racers hear about Tak's prowess as well—and vow to beat him.

"You don't have to know a lot about cars to get drawn into the series' story and action," enthused Maury McIntyre, director of brand development at TOKYOPOP. "*Initial D* offers not only the epic racing sequences, but a great story with well developed characters we think audiences will identify with."

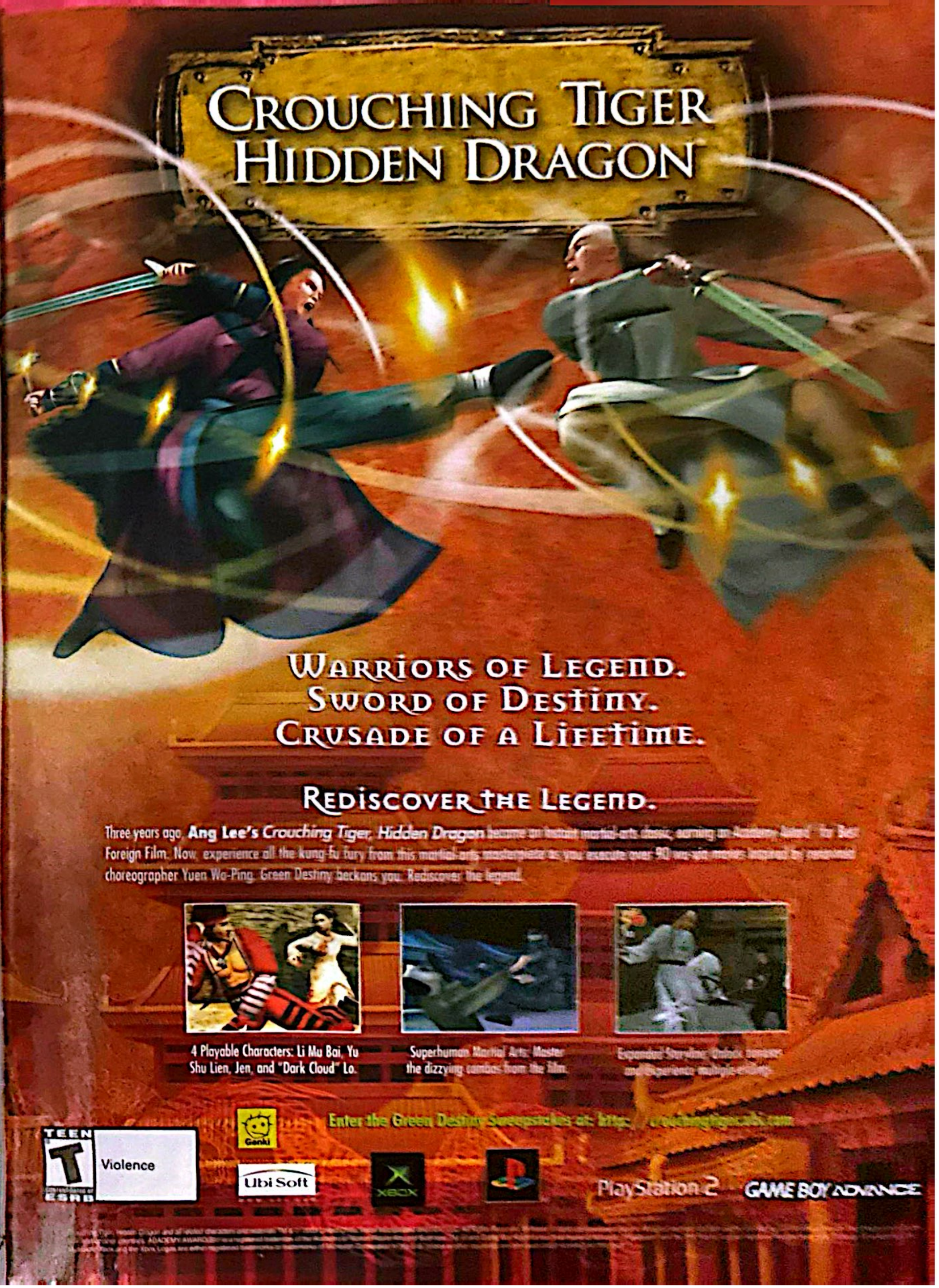
Our engines are already revved but if you're still shaky at the start, here are the five reasons why you'll need heart pills to watch *Initial D*.

5. IT'S FASTER AND MORE FURIOUS

Forget *2 Fast 2 Furious*—that kind of racing action's over way too quickly! Sure, drag racing is dangerous, but racing in *Initial D* packs more action and danger into every second. Thrill as Tak careens around a mountain curve at up to 60 miles an hour, mere inches from the guardrail. Add in the fact that he's following another car doing the exact same thing just mere inches ahead of him—and imagine that race lasting 10 miles!

4. WARNING: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME!

We're quite serious about this. Keiichi Tsuchiya, one of the best drivers in Japan (they call him the "Drift King" because he can make *any* car drift), acted as a technical



CROUCHING TIGER HIDDEN DRAGON

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TEEN Violence

Genki

Ubi Soft

XBOX

PlayStation 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE

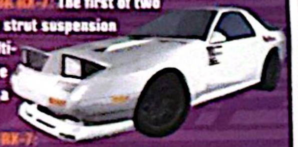
TOOLS & TALENT

A NEWBIE'S GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF DRIFT RACING

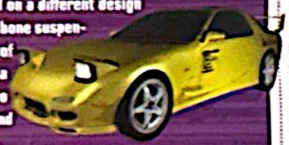
THE CARS...

86 TOYOTA AE TRUENO: Known here in the States as a Toyota Corolla, the 86 is called such because its chassis moniker is AE86. It's a very easy car to learn racing in because it's very lightweight and has a smooth and progressive suspension.

85 TOYOTA LEVIN: A step below the 86 in name, miles behind it in terms of ability. The 85 is the economy version of the 86 with a weaker suspension and engine.



SAVANNA FC3S MAZDA RX-7: The first of two in the show, it has a strut suspension in the front and a multi-link suspension in the rear. It also has a single-turbo engine.



ENFINI FD3S MAZDA RX-7: The second RX-7 is based on a different design and boasts a double-wishbone suspension at all four corners of the car. It also features a sequential-twin turbo engine for higher power and better throttle response.

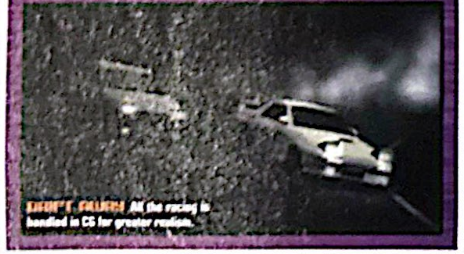
...AND WHAT YOU DO WITH 'EM

DRIFT RACING: Without a doubt, drift racing is the most exciting racing style to watch. Only experienced drifters like Tak can get within mere inches of the guardrail without wiping out. Racers drift into corners because it provides for a better angle of exit out of the corner. There are different ways to start a drift: clutch kick, inertia, braking, curb drop, handbrake—and some people even bounce their cars off of guardrails!

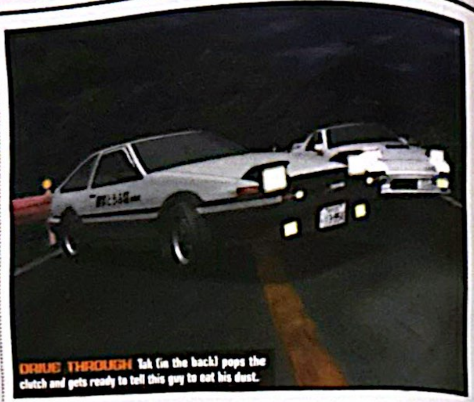
GRIP RACING: Grip driving is the kind used by Formula One racers and NASCAR drivers. Because there's no loss in traction, grip drivers can afford to go fast into the corner to the edge of drifting and come out just as hard. Technically, a grip driver is faster than a drift racer.

NA: It stands for "naturally aspirated" and it means that the car intakes air through the engine naturally. An NA car like the 86 is very controllable in the corners.

TURBO: In the engine of these cars is a turbocharger that forces extra air into the engine, to make it produce more power. Turbo cars, like the RX-7, are faster in the straightaways. ■ TS



[illegible] All the racing is handled in CG for greater realism.



DRIVE THROUGH Tak (in the back) pops the clutch and gets ready to tell this guy to eat his dust.

advisor, so all the racing scenes are completely authentic—from the techniques to the lingo and all the car data. Which means you could take your own car into the hills behind your house and start racing like Tak—right after you sign forms stating that *Anime Insider* is not responsible for any damage to you or your vehicle.

3. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS, BUT...

Japan's a pretty expensive place to live, and a typical allowance isn't enough for some high school girls who want to have the latest in fashion and accessories. Rather than get a part-time job like Tak, Natalie has decided on a more unconventional and unsavory way of earning money. It's a bizarre and frowned-upon tradition in Japan, and we're sure she'll come to her senses, but it's fascinating to get such a peek into Japanese society.

2. REAL-LIFE RACERS HAVING REAL-LIFE PROBLEMS

As exciting as the racing is, the show provides real-life issues to make us care about the racers. Tak is attracted to a girl in his class, but pretty Natalie has that dark secret that she doesn't want him to know about. His friend Iggy wants to become a top racer like Tak—will he ever realize his goal? Situations like these make the downtime between races just as captivating as the races themselves.

1. TUNE UP YOUR ANIME YOURSELF

If you're torn between watching a sub or a dub, *Initial D* has your solution. Each volume contains two versions of each episode, the "Import Classic" which is the original subtitled version and the "Tricked Out" version, which features the dub track and enhanced versions of the already cool CG racing scenes. And just like a racecar, you can mix and match between the two types of episode, creating something entirely new! ●

Associate Editor Trisha Sebastian drives slowly. Very...very...slowly.

GHOST IN THE SHELL
NINJA SCROLL
PERFECT BLUE
BLOOD
X
RIOD
STREET FIGHTER
EVANGELION
EVANGELION
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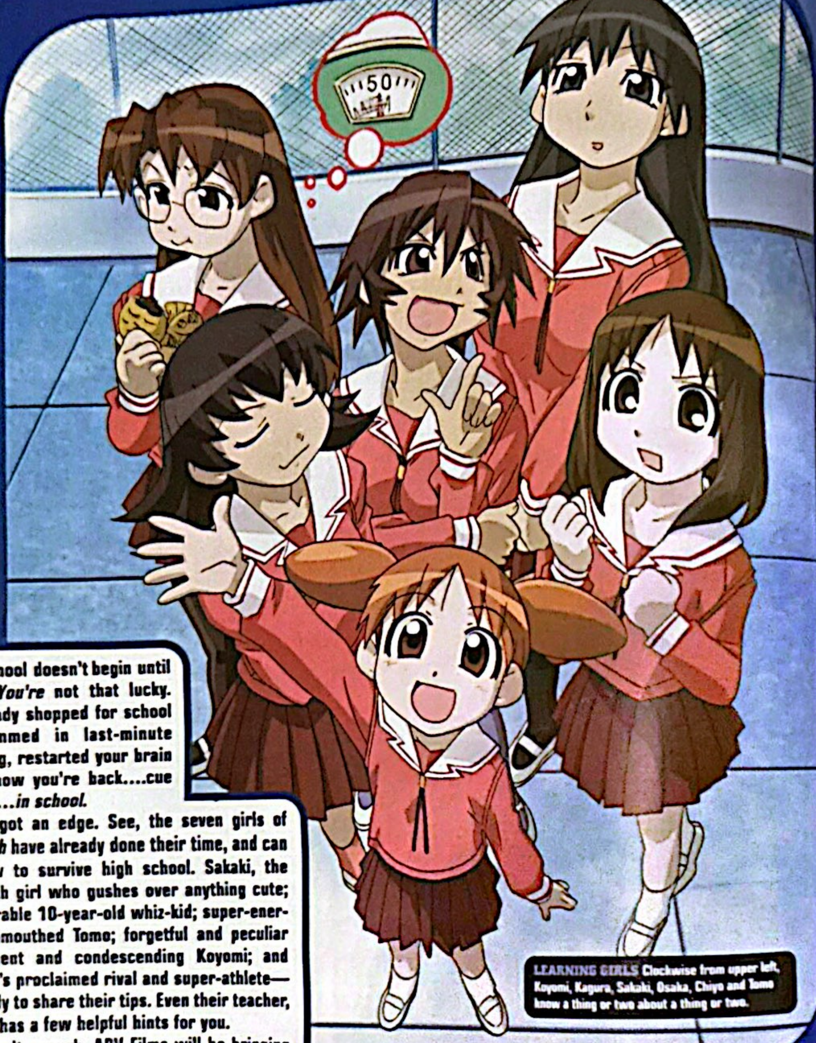
CLASS ACTS

THE GIRLS OF 'AZUMANGA DAIOH' PRESENT THEIR SCHOOL SURVIVAL TIPS

By Miguel A.E. Betita



LEARNING GIRLS Clockwise from upper left, Koyomi, Kagura, Sakaki, Osaka, Chiyo and Tomo know a thing or two about a thing or two.

In Japan, school doesn't begin until April 1st. *You're* not that lucky. You've already shopped for school supplies, crammed in last-minute summer reading, restarted your brain (maybe), and now you're back....cue ominous music...*in school.*

But you've got an edge. See, the seven girls of *Azumanga Daioh* have already done their time, and can teach you how to survive high school. Sakaki, the seemingly-tough girl who gushes over anything cute; Chiyo, the adorable 10-year-old whiz-kid; super-energetic and loudmouthed Tomo; forgetful and peculiar Osaka; intelligent and condescending Koyomi; and Kagura, Sakaki's proclaimed rival and super-athlete—they're all ready to share their tips. Even their teacher, Yukari-sensei, has a few helpful hints for you.

If these aren't enough, ADV Films will be bringing out all 26 episodes of *Azumanga Daioh* in Spring 2004. While that won't get you through midterms, at least you'll be ready for your finals...

BE ON TIME

1. Having a tough time getting to school? If you're like Yukari-sensei here, you may have to bike it, but be careful! If the bike breaks, you'll be late!

2. Although you might not be able to fix it, look around for a helping hand. Here, Yukari-sensei finds one of her students, who kindly offers to help fix her bike's chain.

3. But, nothing's worse than being late. Borrow your student's bike if you have to, and being his teacher means never having to ask forgiveness...or permission.

WATCH FOR STRAYS

1. Tall, quiet Sasaki may look stern, but she loves cute things, especially animals. Seeing this cat loose and outside, Sasaki is immediately concerned.

2. Cats are usually more timid than dogs, so petting a cat is good way to give you a chance to check for that collar. It's always good to take care of our four-legged friends!

3. Of course, some cats are just jerks. Make sure to wash the wound and put a Band-Aid on it.

PEST CONTROL

1. If someone spots a cockroach, kill it! Those things lay millions of eggs, so the sooner you get it, the less roaches you'll have in the room.

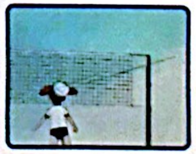
2. Don't let it get away! A rolled-up piece of paper or book makes for an optimal weapon, but watch where you're hitting!

3. After you've gotten the offending roach, it's time to return to studying—ask your teacher how to read a textbook covered with bug guts.

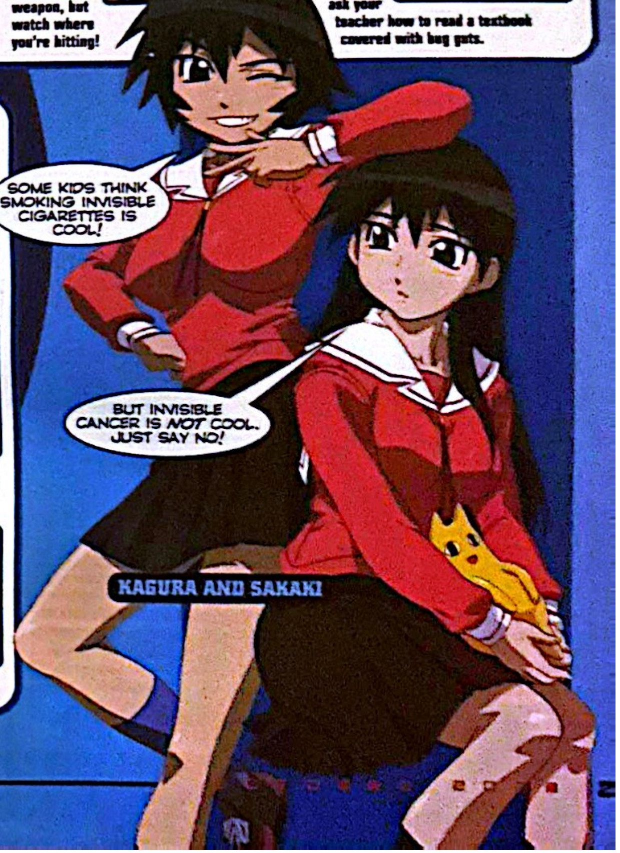
FAIR PLAY IN GYM

1. School isn't just about book-learning. Physical Education is also part of the curriculum. Today, we'll learn about volleyball! First, get into teams.

2. The object is to hit the ball over the net in such a way that the other team misses it. Start by serving the ball, by tossing it into the air and hitting it with the heel of your palm.



3. Over the net, we said. Remember, all the power in the world is useless if you don't have skill.


SOME KIDS THINK SMOKING INVISIBLE CIGARETTES IS COOL!
BUT INVISIBLE CANCER IS *NOT* COOL. JUST SAY NO!

KAGURA AND SAKAKI

GETTING RID OF HICCUPS

1. Hiccups may be harmless, but they sure are annoying. Try to get rid of them by drinking something; if that doesn't work, have a friend hold your nose while you do it.

2. Huh? That didn't work? Well, nothing beats a good old-fashioned back-slapping. Oh, wait…that's for someone who's choking. Sorry.

3. Punching someone in the gut doesn't help at all.

TEST TAKING

1. Midterm exams can tax any high school student. But what about the class idiots? Why, they beg to copy the notes of the smartest person in the class, of course!

2. If the brainiac is being a big jerk and won't help, you'll have to study together. Kaguya, Osaka and Tomo pool their smarts to help each other pass.

3. Okay, so they still bombed the test. Still, it's all in how you look at it. If you add Kaguya, Tomo and Osaka's scores together, it adds to 103! That's better than the brainiac! Nyah!

PROPER ATTIRE

1. A happy, adorable 10-year-old is cute. A happy, adorable 10-year-old showing up for school in a penguin outfit isn't quite appropriate, but it's cuter. It so cute it's scary.

2. Cuter still is watching an adorable 10-year-old girl in a penguin outfit trying to do exercises before the classes begin.

3. But nothing on this Earth is cuter than watching an adorable 10-year-old in a penguin costume unable to stand up. If you see one, push her down. It's totally worth it.

HOW TO TELL THE WEATHER

1. There are many ways that people can tell what the weather will be like. Here, Osaka demonstrates a Japanese technique where you kick off your shoe to figure it out. (Seriously!)

2. After you kick you shoe in the air, watch to see which way it lands. If it faces you, it'll be sunny. If it faces away from you—oops!

3. If course, if you do this, you'll want to be careful where you kick your shoe. And remember, when you walk in your socks, watch for sharp rocks or broken glass on the sidewalk.

DRESSED TO REPRESS

HOW JAPANESE STUDENTS REBEL IN THEIR SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Ever wonder why Japanese students dress the way they do? Well, they have to—and have had to since about 1910. When revamping the public school system, the Japanese government ordered specific uniforms for girls and boys, based on European military outfits—army officers for boys, navy sailors for girls. But for the all the uniformity in uniforms, Japanese kids have managed to figure out a few loopholes. Check it out! ■ MB

TIE 'EM UP—The kerchief around your collar can vary in color, but most are red, blue, or green. Some schools use 'em to indicate the year students enter school.

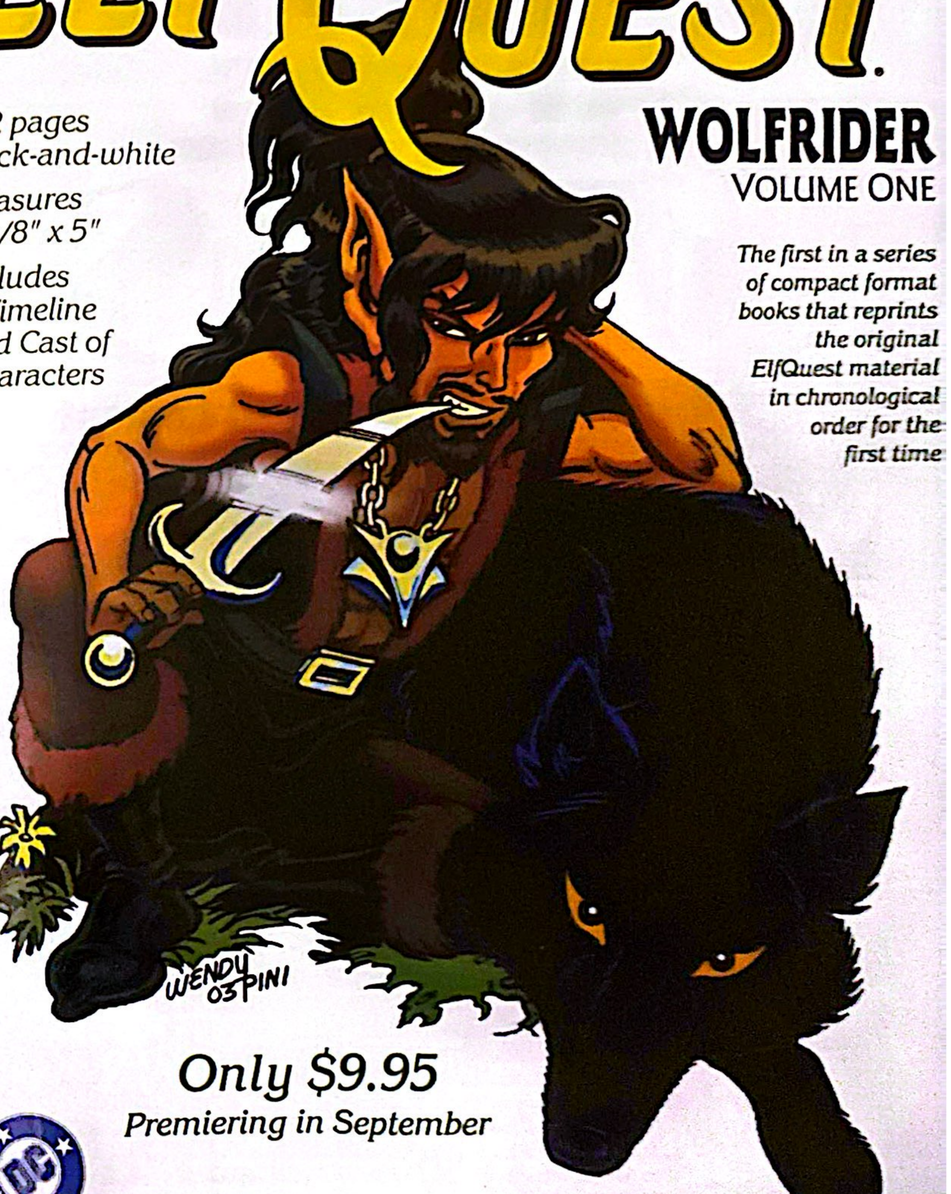
FOOT PLAY—While socks are required, girls go all out with huge socks that require glue to stay on. The socks can sometimes cover their entire shoes!

FASHION FASCISTS—Socks aren't the only way to rebel fashionably! Some hem their skirts above the knees, or wear gaudy jewelry in addition to their uniforms.

COLLAR IT—The easiest way for boys to show their lack of school spirit is to leave their collar undone. It's supposed to be fastened.

HAIR APPARENT—While boys' uniforms are hard to tweak, hair is another matter. While schools request it to be trimmed close, some boys grow it long and/or dye it.

BUTTON UP—When students graduate from high school, girls may ask boys they like for the second button off their uniforms. Why they do this is anyone's guess.



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ANiME AT THE GATES

Presenting the Top 10 Coolest Shows You Can't Watch Without a Trip to Tokyo

By Trisha L. Sebastian

What do a rubber pirate, a robot cat, and a rambunctious ninja all have in common? They're all stars of some of the hottest, coolest anime in the world, and none of them have their passports to come to America.

Despite all the shows that make their way eastward over the Pacific, there are legions of hits in Japan that haven't set a toe onto American shores. Sure, companies have licensed hits as varied as *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* for distribution in the United States, but this process isn't as simple as it seems.

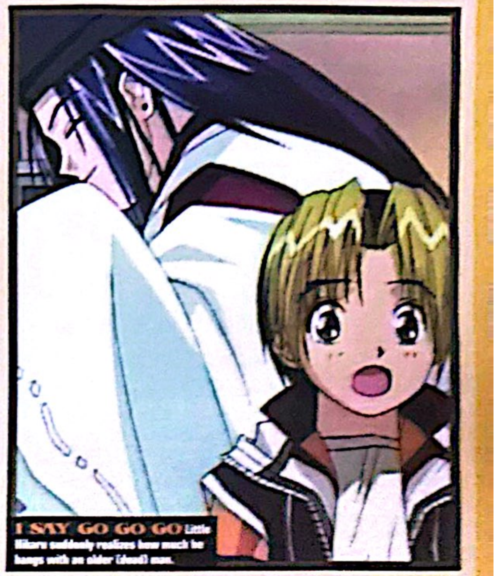
"The littlest things will derail the licensing process," explains Rhona Medina, product development manager at Urban Vision. Not only do companies have to go through a long and competitive negotiation process with the Japanese licensors—paying them high prices and promising certain returns—but sometimes a vague contract element or even a licensor's whim will kill the deal. "Maybe the Japanese will say, 'You have to have this language version only.' Little things like that," sighs Medina.

And that's only for anime that American companies want to bring over. There's a treasure chest of shows deemed too "out there" for Americans, just waiting to be tapped.

Whatever the reason, we stateside folks are still missing a lot. To get you up to speed, we present the top 10 coolest shows in Japan that you've never seen, just to torture your anime-lovin' souls.

10 | HIKARU NO GO

A New King of Games Comes to Town



I SAY GO GO GO Little Hikaru suddenly realizes how much he hangs with an older (dead) man.

WHAT IT IS: Proof that they'll make anime about anything. Go is the ancient game of the Japanese nobility and used to be taken very seriously...so when Sai Fujiwara, an instructor to the emperor of Japan, was accused of cheating in a go game, he felt so dishonored that he took his own life. A thousand years later, Hikaru Shindo is going through his grandfather's old things when he finds a go board that has a bloodstain on it. Curious, he touches it and releases Sai's spirit! Now, Hikaru must help Sai construct the perfect game of go, otherwise Sai won't be able to get into the afterlife. From October 2001 to March 2003, kids in Japan stayed tuned to 75 episodes' worth of go goodness!

WHY IT'S COOL: Like *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, Hotta Yumi and Obata Takeshi's *Hikaru no Go* takes the concept of a game and twists it into something much deeper. For the Japanese, go represents something greater when played, and Hikaru is forced to look deep inside himself for his own nobility and honor. *Hikaru no Go* is credited as not only getting Japanese kids interested in the game again, but promoting the game to other countries as well.

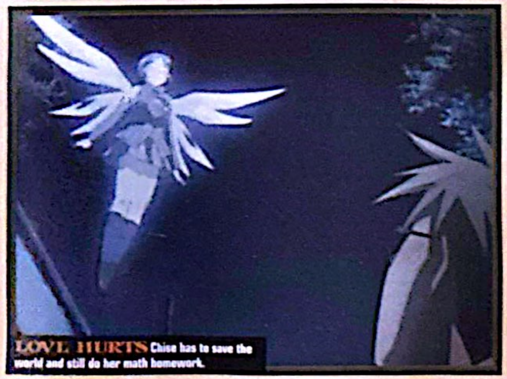
ODDS YOU'LL SEE IT: The American Go Association announced Viz had both the anime and manga rights, but Viz claims only to have the manga. Even if they've only got the one, however, they could get the other quite soon. **6 to 1**

9 | MY GIRLFRIEND, THE ULTIMATE WEAPON

Cute High School Student Annihilates Armies

WHAT IT IS: It's a simple story: boy meets girl, boy falls in love with girl, girl is recruited by military to have all her organs replaced by machinery and become Japan's ultimate weapon in a brutal war. Shuji and Chise (the ultimate weapon) may still be high school students, but the war that erupts around them makes them grow up and grow older in frightening ways. In this 13-episode story from July 2002, they and their friends are forced to make difficult choices between love and duty and honor and survival.

WHY IT'S COOL: Though the premise may seem unreal, the characters and the emotion conveyed are not. Those who have seen this show (called *Saishuu Heiki Kanojo* in Japan, or often, *She, the Ultimate Weapon*) have compared it to the very bleak *Grave of the Fireflies* in terms of emotional content and maturity. Director Atsuko Kase's previous work includes *Gundam the 08th MS Team: Miller's Report*, which also focuses on humanity during wartime; these themes may have prepped her for the themes in this story. The things Shuji and Chise endure would normally not only break a relationship, but break down their spirit as well, and yet there's something that keeps them going. The ending must be seen to be believed.



LOVE HURTS Chise has to save the world and still do her math homework.

ODDS YOU'LL SEE IT: Its critical acclaim among hardcore, anime-importing fans make this *Girlfriend* a hot date indeed. It might be extra-depressing, but if *Grave of the Fireflies* can make it here, *My Girlfriend* can. **8 to 1**

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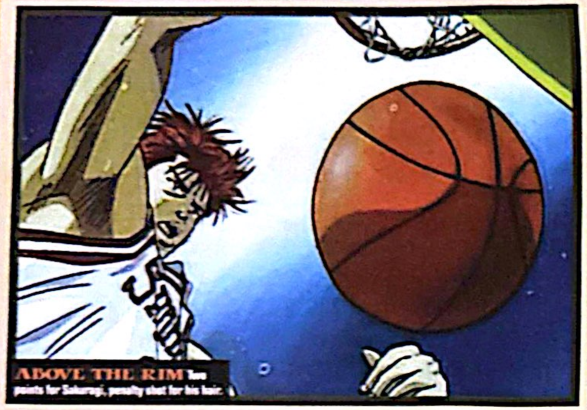
8 | SLAM DUNK

Exciting NBA Action—Animated!

WHAT IT IS: Sakuragi falls in love at first sight with Haruko on his first day of high school and will do anything to impress her—including joining her brother's basketball team. Knowing nothing about the sport, he gets drawn into the competitive world of high school sports and a rivalry against the team's top player, Rukawa. The more he plays, however, the more he realizes his own talents and starts to gain a true understanding of the sport of basketball. As far as anime about sports go, this is the biggest—it spans 101 episodes from October 1993 to March 1996 and four OVAs.

WHY IT'S COOL: *Slam Dunk* combines the popular sport of basketball with the kind of in-depth storytelling Japan is famous for. One thing that helped propel its fame in Japan is that the names of two of the high schools were taken from real life. Created by Inoue Takehiko, *Slam Dunk* has already been exported to countries like the Philippines and Spain to tremendous acclaim—and could take the U. S. by storm as well. The fact that it's currently being serialized in *Raijin Comics* is a big help as well.

ODDS YOU'LL SEE IT: Sports anime hasn't gotten much of a foothold in the U.S. besides ADV's excellent *Princess Nine*. ADV Films translator Shoko Oono said, "Whether a sports anime gets brought over or not will probably largely depend on what the story is." Most folks think *Slam Dunk* is pretty darned good. **15 to 1**



ABOVE THE RIM Two points for Sakuragi, penalty shot for his hair.

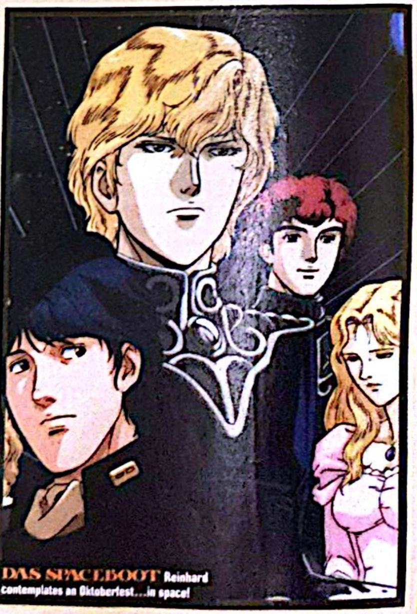
7 | LEGEND OF GALACTIC HEROES

Talking Germans...in Space!

WHAT IT IS: In a far-flung future, Reinhard of the Prussian-based Galactic Empire struggles to win a war against the democratic Free Planets Alliance, lead by Yang—but corruption from within both groups threatens them all. Stretching out over the equivalent of 45 Japanese DVDs, this anime from 1988 was originally based on 18 novels.

WHY IT'S COOL: More epic than *Star Wars* (and that's counting the prequels as well), there are so many characters in *Legend of Galactic Heroes* (a. k. a. *Ginga Eiyuu Densetsu*) that you almost need a scorecard to keep up. There are no clear-cut good guys and bad guys. Both the members of the Galactic Empire and the Free Planets Alliance have strong reasons why they should win the war. To achieve this egalitarian point of view, *Legend* delves into the lives of the generals, the soldiers, the farmers—everyone gets a chance to have their say. Originally released only via mail order, *Legend* has become an underground cult classic. The series is just now coming out on DVD in Japan to the tune of approximately 242,550 yen (or $2,000)!

ODDS YOU'LL SEE IT: Wright Staff Co. Ltd. of Japan, the overseas licensee to *Legend* and other works by series creator Yoshiki Tanaka, is looking to subtitle and distribute the entire series—if at least 1,500 fans say they'll pre-order it at their website, www.gineigoods.com. Will ya? **25 to 1**

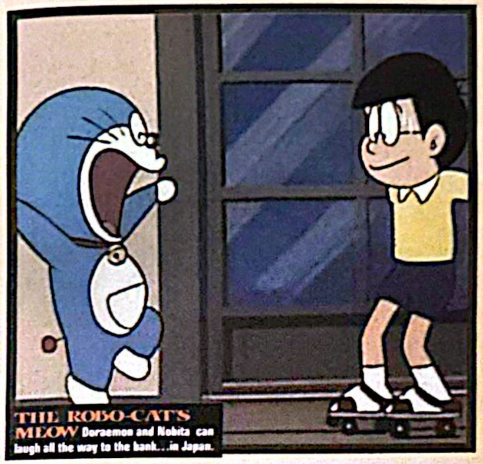


DAS SPACEBOOT Reinhard contemplates an Oktoberfest...in space!

6 | DORAEMON

Kitty Robot Conquers Japan's Hearts

WHAT IT IS: From the 22nd century comes Doraemon, a robot cat with an important mission. 20th century kid Nobita Nobi's descendants are so poor as a result of his bumblings that they buy the dysfunctional cat and send him back in time to correct Nobita's mistakes. The crazy cat ends up leading Nobita on a series of adventures spanning over 25 years from his original TV series debut in 1973, to the present long-running show that started in 1979!



THE ROBO-CAT'S MEOW Doraemon and Nobita can laugh all the way to the bank....in Japan.

WHY IT'S COOL: Like Mickey Mouse, Doraemon's popularity is gargantuan and enduring, largely due to the fantastic and wonderful gadgets from the 22nd century that he pulls out of a drawer in his stomach. Sometimes they're helpful, sometimes they're not. What ever happens, though, there's sure to be some lesson to be learned that's never too cloying or sweet. Even now, there are new *Doraemon* shows on TV in Japan that are just as crazy and fun as the original shows, and Doraemon can be found promoting everything from canned food to postage stamps. *Doraemon* has made creator Fujiko F. Fujio (a pen name) as well known in Japan as Walt Disney is to us. *Doraemon*'s also managed to produce spin-offs featuring his cousin Dorami-chan, a smaller female version of the robotic cat as well.

ODDS YOU'LL SEE IT: ShoPro Entertainment USA was shopping around the merchandise at a recent New York licensing show, but no one was hawking the actual anime. Boo! **20 to 1**

GO EAST, YOUNG MAN!

Shows Go Both Ways—Presenting the Most Popular American Shows in Japan

1. Tom & Jerry (above)

Animals beating the pulp out of each other is an international concept. First appearing on Japanese television in 1964, the series made it possible for other American cartoons to follow.

2. Powerpuff Girls (right)

Adorable girls with magical powers and huge eyes? There's no wonder why *Powerpuff Girls* is so popular in Japan. The real surprise was the *PPG* merchandising explosion, usually reserved for home-grown products, which followed its release.

3. X-Men: Evolution (below)

Many Japanese fans first became familiar with the *X-Men* characters through the Capcom video games. Thanks to the live-action movies, *X-Men: Evolution* is now one of the highest rated shows on Cartoon Network Japan.

4. South Park

Hilariously misbehaved kids á la *Crayon Shin-chan*—check. Egg-shaped, screeching characters á la *Doraemon*—check. Godzilla—check. *South Park* already contained enough "Japanese" elements that its success was a given.

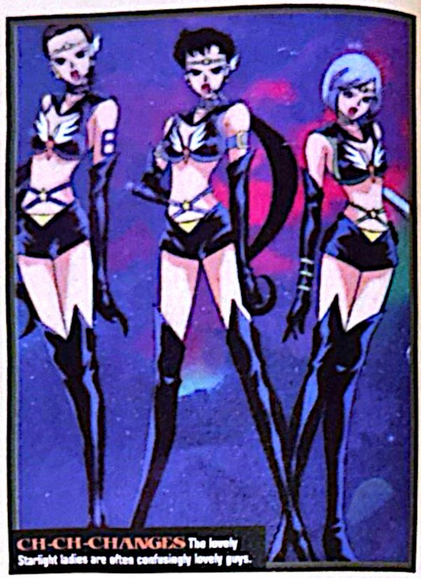
5. Batman Beyond

Akira's Katsuhiro Otomo once drew a *Batman* story and superhero fan Kia Asamiya released an entire *Batman* graphic novel. With so many Japanese fans and its anime-esque style, the show found its Eastern audience easily.

■ **KUMAR SIVASUBRAMANIAN**

5 | SAILOR MOON SAILOR STARS

The Most Requested Gender-Bender in Anime


CH-CH-CHANGES The lovely Starlight ladies are often confusingly lovely guys.

WHAT IT IS: You may have heard of a little show called *Sailor Moon*...basically, there's a whiny, love-struck girl named Serena (or Usagi in the Japanese), who, when evil lurks as it so frequently does, changes into the superheroine Sailor Moon, and meanwhile romances her destined love Darian. In March 1996, the fifth *SM* season, *Sailor Stars*, introduced the Starlights: usually teenage boys who play in a rock 'n' roll band called The Three Lights. But when they transform into the Sailor Star Lights, their costume isn't the only thing to change—the guys turn into girls with one wave of their wand!

WHY IT'S COOL: Because it's more *Sailor Moon*. Naoko Takeguchi's *SM* didn't get to be one of the most popular anime on either side of the Pacific without some good reasons—namely that it's action-packed, funny and mighty romantic. *Sailor Stars* is the most whacked-out of the shows' five seasons because of the Starlights, but also features the final battles between the Sailor Scouts and the ultimate evil—Galaxia, formerly the ultimate Sailor Soldier, who was corrupted by Chaos when she sealed it away! Major stuff!

ODDS YOU'LL SEE IT: Pioneer released *SM* seasons 3 and 4 uncut, while ADV recently release seasons 1 and 2 (finally), so it seems American anime companies know the original Japanese *Sailor Moon* sells. The rumor mill says it's the Japanese licensor who's balking, possibly afraid to tarnish *Sailor Moon*'s American reputation with all the Star Lights' transexuality. Still, money talks... **10 to 1**

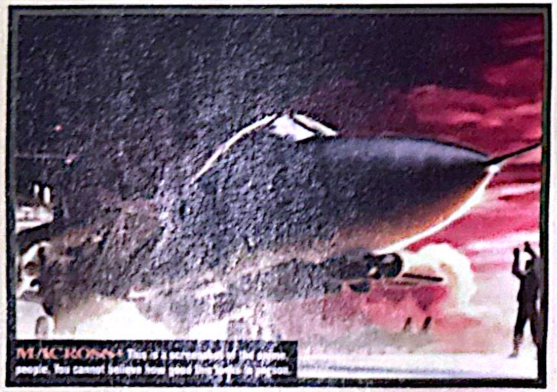
4 | MACROSS ZERO

More Aerial Dogfights, Less Lynn Minmei

WHAT IT IS: A prequel to the popular *Super Dimensional Fortress Macross* saga, this OVA series that began in December 2002 takes a look at the formation of the U. N. Spacy one year before the Zentradi invasion. The original *Macross*'s Roy Fokker returns as the hotshot leader of a fighter squadron using new alien technology—the multi-purpose, multi-transformable Valkyrie. At the same time, ace pilot Shin Kudo has been shot down and is stranded on a tropical island where a beautiful village maiden seems to know everything about an upcoming war. Two episodes are out in Japan now, with more on the way.

WHY IT'S COOL: The beloved *Macross* series gets a facelift with this new OVA series. It's just like the old series because it uses familiar characters like Roy and familiar concepts like the Valkyrie. At the same time, it's completely new because it uses the latest in computer technology to come up with the dramatic flying sequences. The computer effects are also put to good use in showcasing the lush tropical island and its inhabitants. Plus, it's directed and written by Shoji Kawamori—the guy directed and wrote the original *Macross* movie *Do You Remember Love?*, the stellar *Macross Plus*, and *Vision of Escaflowne* as well.

ODDS YOU'LL SEE IT: Because it's produced by Bandai Visual in Japan, Bandai Entertainment has been rumored to be working on it, but Bandai Marketing Manager Jerry Chu flat out denies it...for now. **4 to 1**

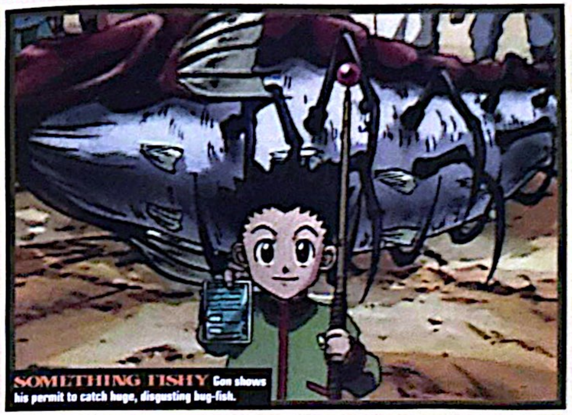

MACROSS+ This is a screenshot of the anime, people. You cannot believe how good this looks in person.

3 | HUNTER X HUNTER

Action, Adventure and Kid Killers!

WHAT IT IS: Gon was happily living with his aunt who took him in after his father died, but a chance encounter revealed that not only was his dad still alive, but he's a famous Hunter! Only people with special skills and abilities can become Hunters. Spurred by a wish to seek out his father, Gon decides to take the Hunter test. He's going to have to battle unscrupulous judges and competitors to get to his goal...will he succeed? With 62 TV episodes and eight OVA episodes, this series from October 1999 is still a hot hit.

WHY IT'S COOL: *Hunter x Hunter* comes from the mind of Yoshihiro Togashi, the same man who created the ultra-hot series *Yu Yu Hakusho*—this is a man who knows how to make great stories. *Hunter x Hunter* falls into the adventure-fighting genre of anime, and yet is refreshingly new. Each character is as intriguing and distinct as those in Togashi's *Yu Yu Hakusho*, with a rich fantasy world taking place of *YYH*'s supernatural one. Besides, the TV series was directed by Kazuhiro Furuhashi, the same guy who directed another ultra-hot series, *Rurouni Kenshin*. With a parentage like that, it's anime gold!


SOMETHING FISHY Gon shows his permit to catch huge, disgusting bug-fish.

ODDS YOU'LL SEE IT: According to Internet news reports, Shueisha—a Viz, LLC business partner—applied for a trademark for *Hunter X Hunter* "comic books and comic magazines" in October 2002, but the manga still hasn't come out yet. And there's no word on the anime. **12 to 1**

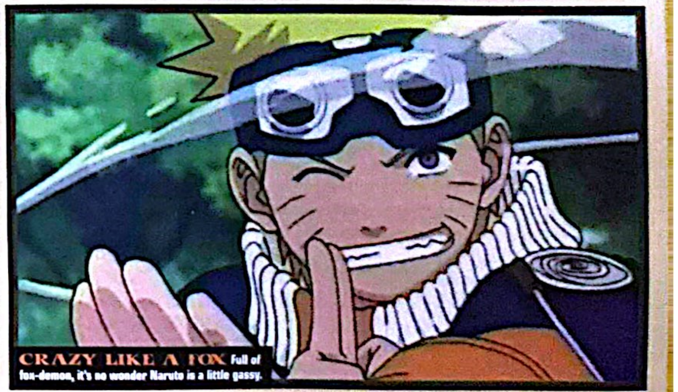
2 | NARUTO

Kid Ninja Outfoxes the Competition

WHAT IT IS: Once upon a time, a nine-tailed fox demon decimated the countryside and only the Konohagakure ninja were able to defeat it. They sealed its spirit away in a baby and swore never to tell the child of his former past. Twelve years later, that baby has grown into a wild delinquent named Naruto, who's determined to be the greatest ninja ever...but not obey any of the rules! Since its TV debut in October 2002, this show has been raking in fans, and with the success of the manga version in *Shonen Jump*, it's made even more fans over here.

WHY IT'S COOL: Everyone loves ninja, and creator Masashi Kishimoto has capitalized on this in spades with *Naruto*. You've got playful punky ninja like Naruto, silent brooding ones like Sasuke, cute ones like Sakura and of course, the stern teacher-types like Kakashi and Iruka. There are also different ninja clans, each with their own awesome, signature fighting ninja moves and combat styles. Like all good shônen titles, there's a lot of emphasis on friendship with Naruto, Sasuke and Sakura overcoming their dislikes for each other and learning how to work together as a team.

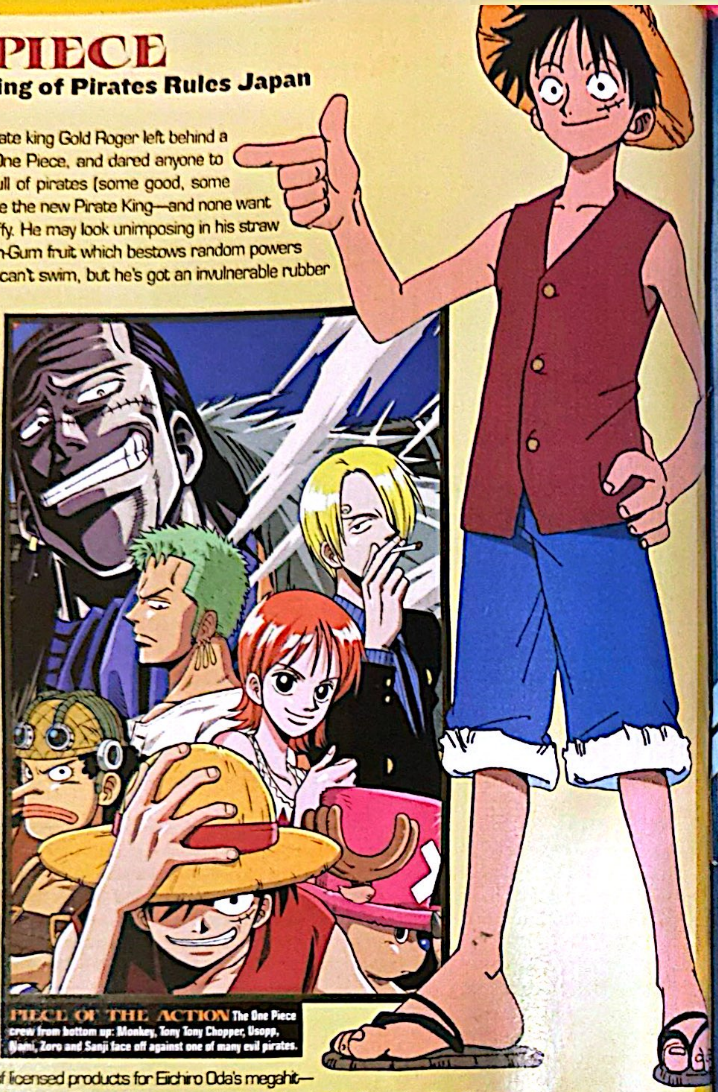
ODDS YOU'LL SEE IT: Its popularity in *Shonen Jump* make this a shoo-in, but the show's not even finished yet in Japan. However, *Shonen Jump*'s other hit, *Shaman King*, will debut this fall on the FoxBox, so this ninja could be ready for action. **3 to 1**


CRAZY LIKE A FOX Full of fox-demon, it's no wonder Naruto is a little gassy.

Scanned with CamScanner

1 | ONE PIECE

The Would-Be King of Pirates Rules Japan



PIECE OF THE ACTION The One Piece crew from bottom up: Monkey, Tony Tony Chopper, Usopp, Nami, Zoro and Sanji face off against one of many evil pirates.

WHAT IT IS: The pirate king Gold Roger left behind a legendary treasure called One Piece, and dared anyone to find it. Now the world is full of pirates (some good, some bad), determined to become the new Pirate King—and none want it more than Monkey D. Luffy. He may look unimposing in his straw hat, but he's eaten the Gum-Gum fruit which bestows random powers on the eater. Now, Monkey can't swim, but he's got an invulnerable rubber body, which he can stretch to absurd lengths. His crew consists of tortured bishōnen badass Roronoa Zoro, whose goal is to become the best swordsman in the world, and also able navigator and thief Nami, who steals treasure for a secret purpose. The crew gets rounded out with kung fu chef Sanji, cowardly comic relief (and that's saying a lot in this show) Usopp and Chopper, the anthropomorphic reindeer-cum-medical doctor. Together, they all have to face their pasts—and a bunch of absurd and/or truly treacherous pirates—in their search for the legendary One Piece!

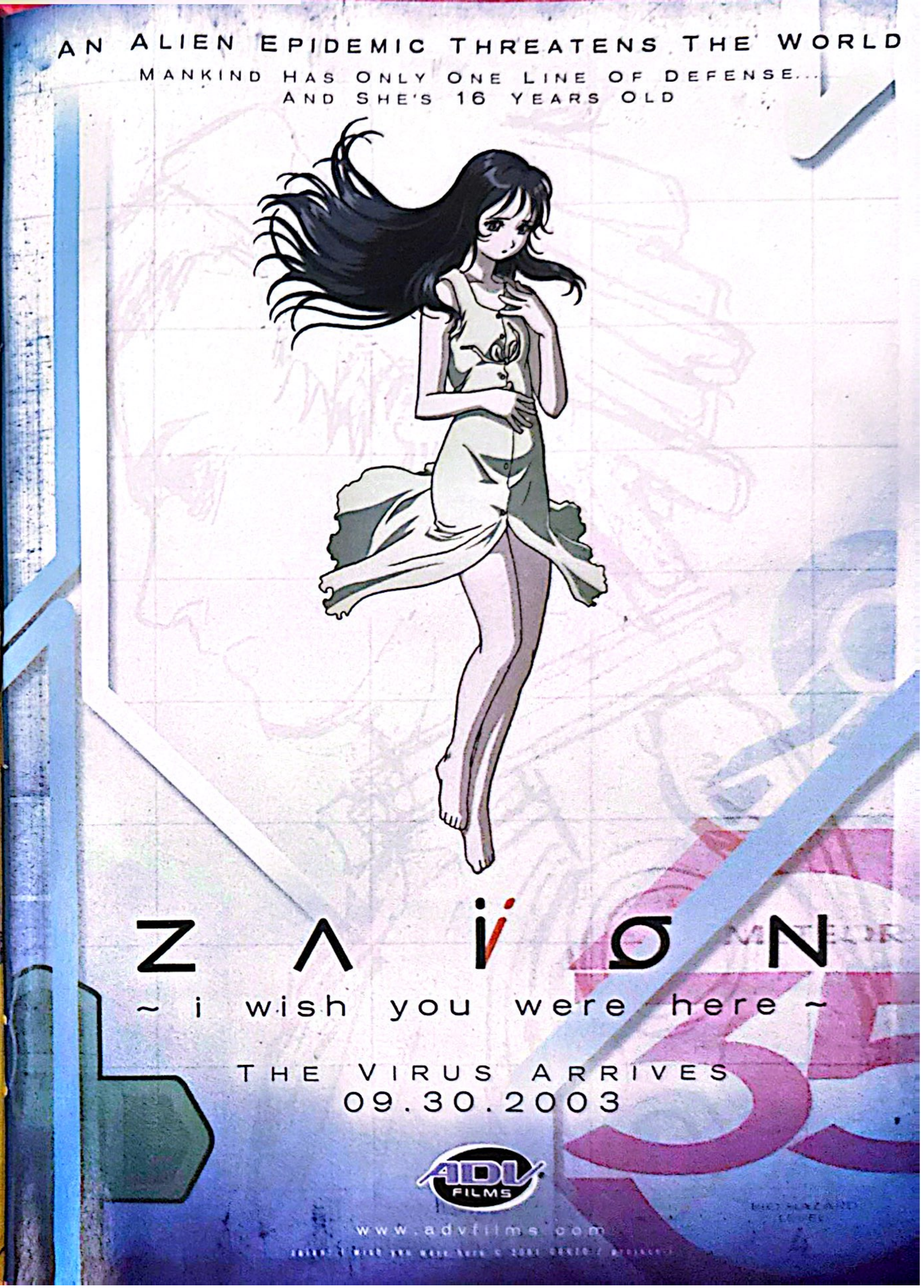
WHY IT'S COOL: *One Piece* is the biggest anime since *Dragon Ball Z*, and we all know how big that got. Since the anime began in 1999, the *One Piece* mania hasn't let up in Japan (the manga volumes continue to break sales records too). There are currently over 110 episodes, eight games, numerous movies and a slew of licensed products for Eichiro Oda's megahit—and the Japanese are crazy for more. Some anime stores in Japan have whole floors for *One Piece* merchandise!

All this heat is for one very good reason—*One Piece* is awesome. It has more action, adventure, comedy and creativity in one episode than most shows get during their entire run. Monkey's rubber-body powers would be enough for most, but add Zoro—who's so good he fights with three swords at a time (one in his mouth!), melee whizzes Nami and Sanji, the incredible slingshot accuracy of Usopp, and... well, just wait until you see what Tony Tony Chopper does. Now, throw them in with incredibly lush and dangerous environments, from pirate-infested seas to monster-filled islands, and the adventures are endless.

But nothing beats the sheer hilarity. From Monkey's obliviousness, Nami's schemes, and Usopp just being Usopp...look, any show which features pirates whose pirate flag features a skull wearing a straw hat is serious about its comedy.

ODDS YOU'LL SEE IT: Last year, FUNimation president Gen Fukunaga announced they had acquired the rights, but the announcement may have come too soon—there's been zero word since, and a recent call to FUNimation yielded the words, "No comment." It hurts so bad... **2 to1**

Associate Editor Trisha Sebastian has never been seen stealing puppies. At least not in America, anyway.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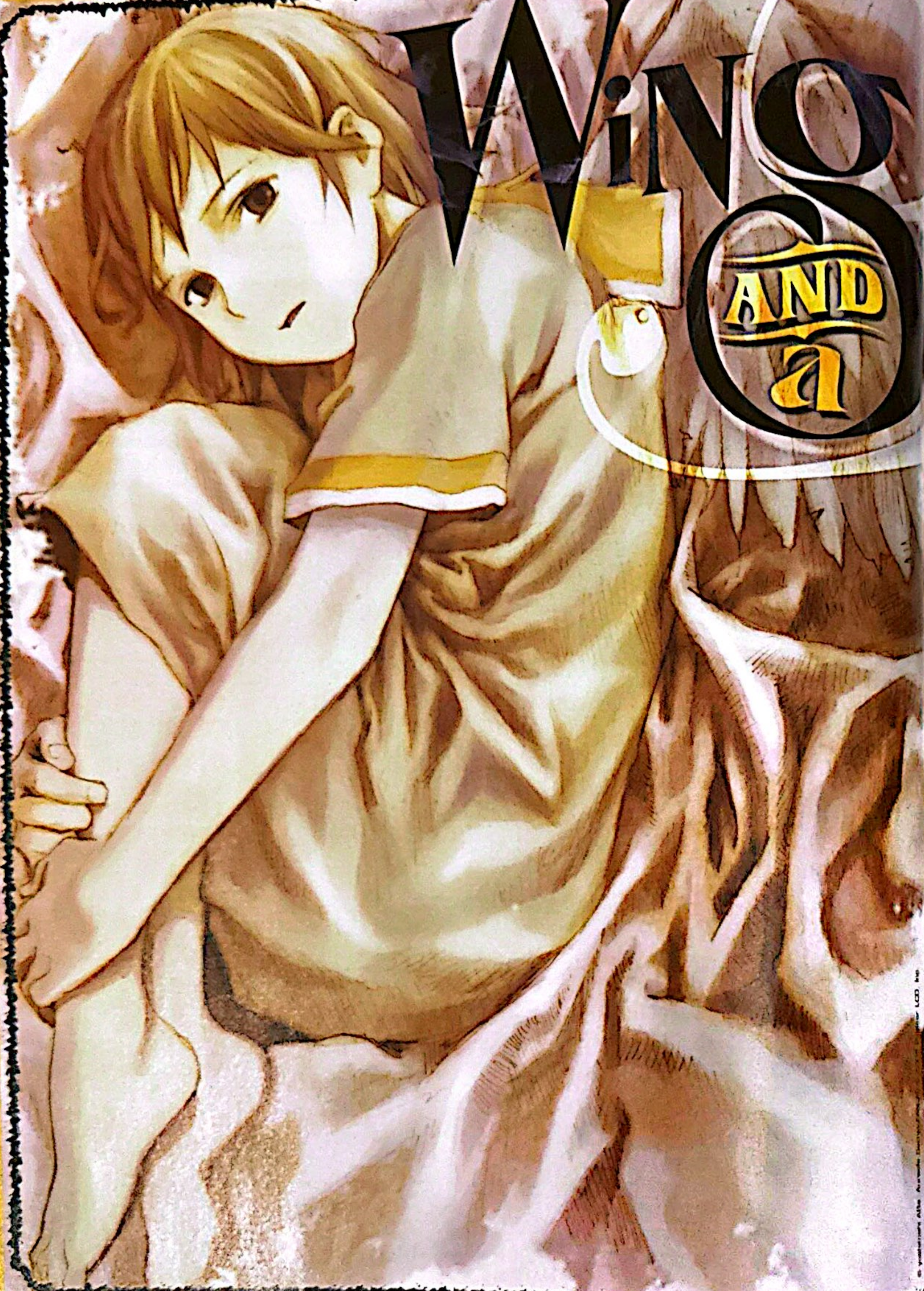
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Wing and a FlaiR

Soar Into the Creation of yoshitoshi ABe's Latest Work of Art 'Haibane Renmei'

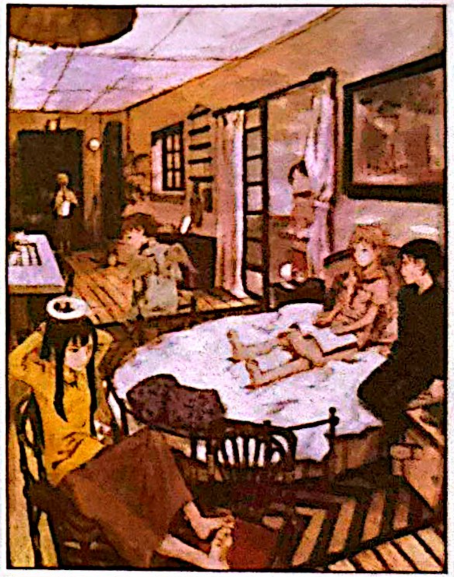
By Robert Bricken

When your friends who've failed to appreciate anime complain that each series looks alike, force them to look at the works of yoshitoshi ABe. Then have them apologize, for his artwork is as distinctive as a group of young angels living amongst men.

Perhaps more of a designer than a manga artist, ABe got his start creating doujinshi (non-professional, fan-made manga) and designing video games in the 1990s. His breakthrough came when producers saw his website and asked him to design their anime and videogame series—which became *Serial Experiments Lain*, the dark story of a girl descending into a technological world. As ABe became a revered anime celebrity, Lain was followed by the "fluffier" series *NieA_7* (pronounced "knee-uh under seven"). Now, his newest creation, *Haibane Renmei*, has come to America on DVD from Pioneer.

Renmei, originally one of ABe's doujinshi, is a charming tale of young children mysteriously born anew with wings and halos. It's a somber story yet sometimes deceptively light in tone—an interesting middle-ground between *Lain* and *NieA_7*. After captivating Japanese audiences last winter, Pioneer was eager to license it for America.

When we interviewed the 33-year-old ABe, he was soft-spoken, casually dressed in a T-shirt and slacks—an appearance that belies a mind that created such imaginative works. ABe was happy to discuss each piece, but wants the fans to interpret his art for themselves, and not limit their experience to his own meanings.



THE BEGINNING "*Haibane Renmei* was made in a very experimental way. We started the project without planning the story or the characters. It was very ad-libbed," says ABe, looking at his cover to the doujinshi. "When this drawing was made, the only thing that existed was a description of this room. Kuu's character doesn't have the same look as you see over there or the same costume or anything else. I just realized, but Reki is barefoot. As you can see here, some are wearing shoes, some are not, so at this point I hadn't decided about the shoe thing."

ANIME INSIDER: Let's get the obvious question out of the way. Why do you capitalize your name "yoshitoshi ABe?"

yoshitoshi ABe: I started using a computer way back in 1990, and my online name was AB. Thus ABe.

Fair enough. So where did *Haibane Renmei* come from?

From where all my stories comes from; my own subconscious.

Do you find a lot of angels in your subconscious?

Actually, in my opinion they aren't angels. They are Haibane...the Japanese characters (the kanji) for "hai" means "ash", while "bane" means "wings", so they're really "ash-wings." They have nothing to do with angels that are associated with Christianity.

The segment where Rakka so painfully develops her wings certainly didn't seem divine.

The pain of the wings is a symbol for losing the past, and being reborn into the new world. It also indicates that they have a special existence in that world.

So if they're not traditional angels, is there any kind of religious statement in *Haibane Renmei*?

I neither accept nor deny any kind of religion. I feel that it's okay for anyone to have their own beliefs. I do not believe in one particular religion myself, but I do think that God should exist. But I think that religion is based on each and everyone's own experiences. And *Haibane Renmei* reflects my own religious philosophy and ethics on birth and life after death.

But Christian art must have influenced the design.

I wasn't specifically conscious of Christianity itself. *Haibane Renmei* has angel-like beings as the basis of the theme, so there a lot of Christian aspects around it, but specifically I didn't specify any religion in the anime. So therefore, during the show when you see other statues or altars, they kept them indeterminable in terms of what religion they belong to. There is a sense of a spiritual issue, of course, and there is a concept of God, but no specific one. I'm not against Christianity.

Understood. Does *Haibane Renmei* have a moral, then?

I'm not sure how to answer. What I want my viewers to feel or know should already exist in my work. It doesn't have to be explained by me.

Then you must want the viewers to feel at least a little melancholy. Both the story and the art style are very muted.

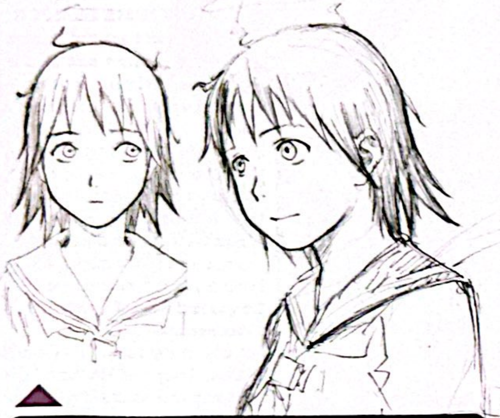
That just happens to be my preference. I don't like anything too bright.

How do you feel about fans calling you an anime "auteur?"

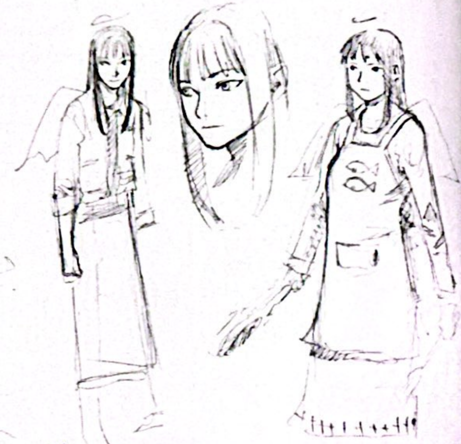
I don't think what I create is "art." I think it's more of an illustration. Maybe they like to call me an auteur because I went to art school. The only difference between me and other artists is that while manga is often constructed as [a straight visual representation] by most people, I try to use drawings as [composed pictures]. That's the only difference.

You once said that drawing was a kind of therapy for you. How so?

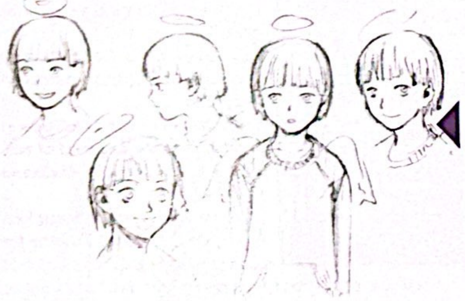
When I draw a line, or color the pictures, I can tell that my inner thoughts or my feelings come out on paper. By recognizing what you feel inside by seeing it for yourself, I assume that could be therapeutic to anybody.



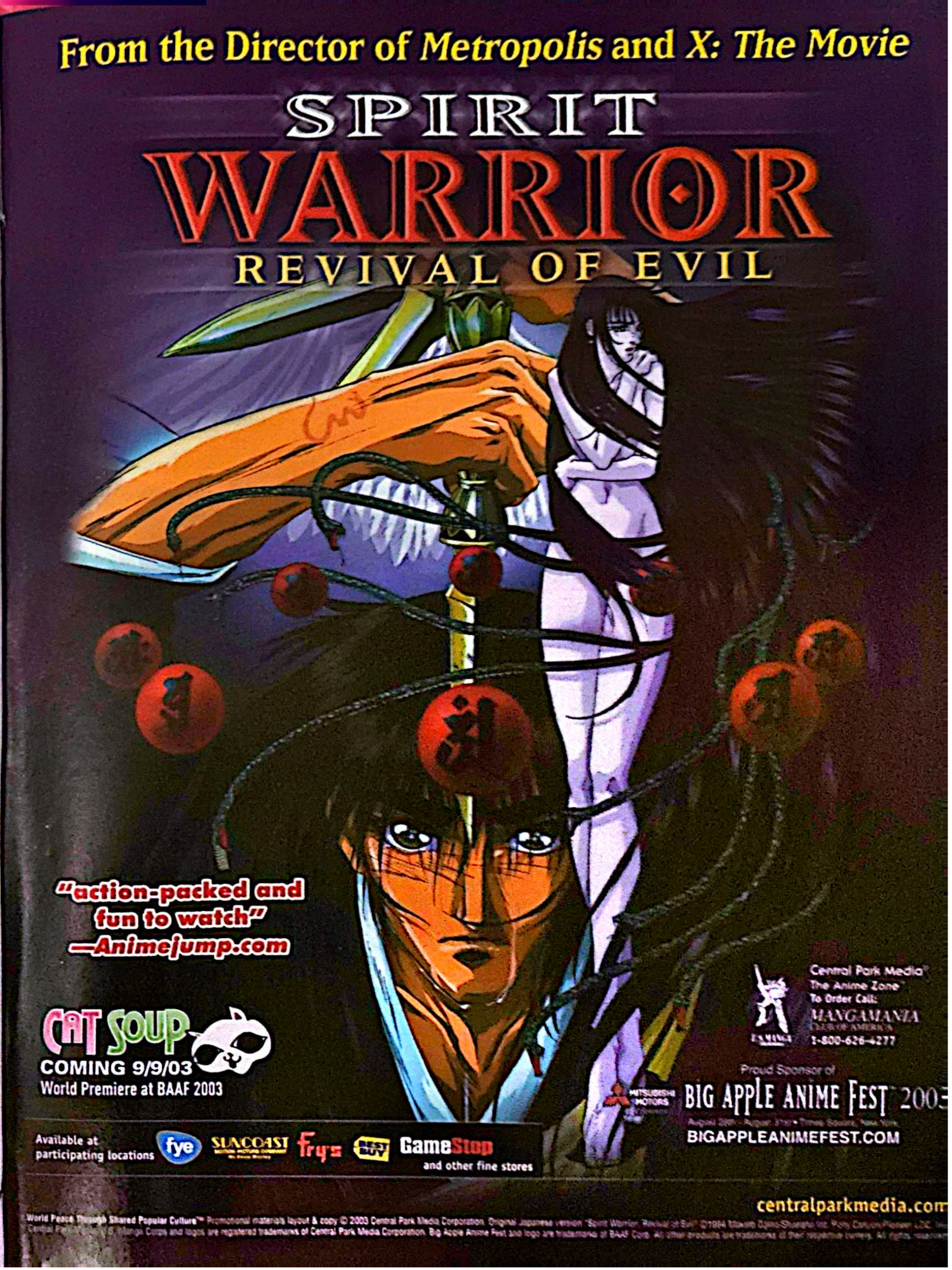
RAKKA Rakka is the main character of *Haibane Renmei*. The first episode starts with her birth from a giant egg. As she explores the world of the Haibane, so do the viewers. "It was actually very difficult to develop the main character Rakka," says ABe. "Since she essentially started as a blank slate, it took her the longest time to really truly develop as a character. A lot of the character design came about spontaneously as I was going through this ad-lib process. I added her static-electricity hair as an after-thought."



REIKI TAKES CHARGE Like any ABe series, there's more going on below the surface. "At the very beginning, Reiki took on the role of being the leader who takes care of the group," says ABe about the girl who informs Rakka–and the viewers–about the Haibane's world. "Later on, the reasons why she's behaving this way are revealed–she's atoning for unspecific sins. If there's anything behind her constant smoking, she may feel uncomfortable being praised and being looked upon as good, when she feels she's just trying to live or exist. So, perhaps maybe there's a subconscious desire in her to express that she's uncomfortable being looked upon as good."



KUU GETS PERSONALITY With no set characters from the beginning, they evolved over time. "Kuu changed the most from the beginning of the anime to the end," reveals ABe. "In the doujinshi, Kuu had no lines, so it's definitely a big difference in the anime. At the beginning I really didn't know how the character fit into the scheme of things and he didn't even have a whole personality. I originally imagined him as much more of a mature character–but while we were devising the anime, he started taking on the role of being one of the youngest."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How is it that your designs for *Haibane*, *Lain* and *NieA_7* stand out as so different from the average anime?

In Japan, I am known more as an artist whose character designs are rather simple and don't stand out too much. For some reason, I get these comments that they are unique every so often, but there is no one single character that I have created that seems to stand out. Besides, each character comes from so many different ideas and meanings that they can't really be compared together.

Can you tell us about your newest project?

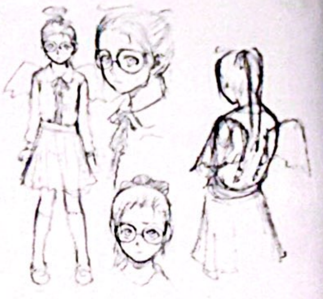
Currently, I am a character designer for the anime called *Texhnolyze* [about an armless boxer and clairvoyant girl in a dark, technological city; it's just been licensed by Pioneer Entertainment for a 2004 release]. After I am done with that, I would like to take a little rest and rejuvenate. I've been working non-stop recently.

All your series have very eclectic subjects. How do you choose them?

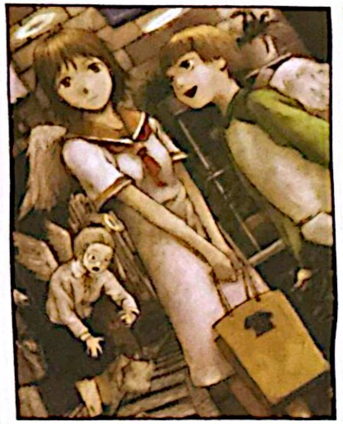
You know, I don't think my projects are eclectic; I just draw whatever I can. Plus, I hardly ever watch anime myself so I don't have normal ideas of what typical anime should be anyway.

Coincidentally, Managing Editor Robert Bricken's favorite song is "Angel" by Aerosmith. And he hatched from an egg

MISSING HIKARI "Unfortunately, in the actual anime Hikari didn't get to have a really big part in it, but she's one of my favorite characters," admits ABe about this design sketch. "Her design relies a great deal on the animators to all of develop into all different details including the expression, or how her hair is, and different aspects of this particular character. The voice actress we used for Hikari both wear the same glasses, so that was a nice coincidence."



WINGING IT Viewers might notice a discrepancy in the Haibane's wing size. "The wings are supposed to be small, but the director asked to make them bigger to make a really strong impression when Rakka first gets born," confesses ABe. "I agreed, but when I saw them, they were much bigger than I envisioned. Even in my drawings, though, they vary…they started out little but then gradually got bigger and bigger until I realized I'm [drawing them that way], and then I shrunk them. But then I made them bigger again. It's kind of a cycle."



VITAL STATS

yoshitoshi ABe

BORN: August 3rd, 1971

BASE OF OPERATIONS: Tokyo

SCHOOL: Japanese painting department of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music

NUMBER OF COMPUTERS AT HOME: Seven.

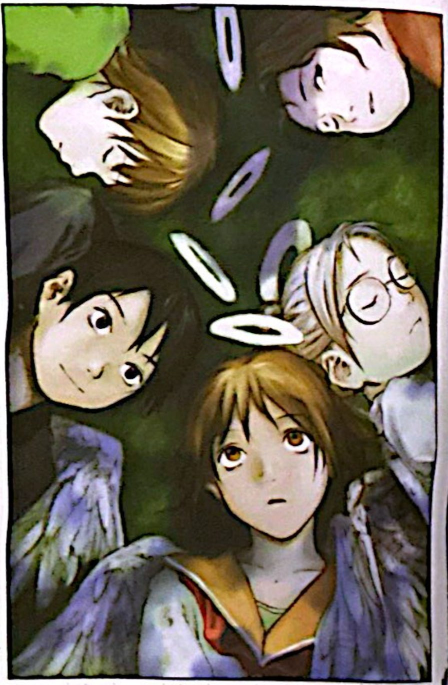
FAVORITE ARTISTS: "For manga, Yukinobu Hoshino (*Saber Tiger*, *2001 Nights*); for painting, Kyousuke Chinai and Toshio Tabuchi."

WHAT HE'S BE DOING IF HE WASN'T AN ARTIST: "I can't imagine myself being anything else."

HIS CHILDHOOD TRAUMA: "As a child, I was prohibited to read manga." RB

ALL IN THE FAMILY

"In this picture I tried to express a little bit of the feel of each character" explains ABe. "Maybe somebody's a little careless, maybe someone's over-worried. It actually *shows the* whole relationship between *Rakka and* the whole group. She's at *the bottom* and lost in thought. Kana's bright-eyed, looking directly at you. The shadow *is* Reiki, who's not seen, but actually overlooking them all, saying 'Well, maybe it's about time to get going.'"



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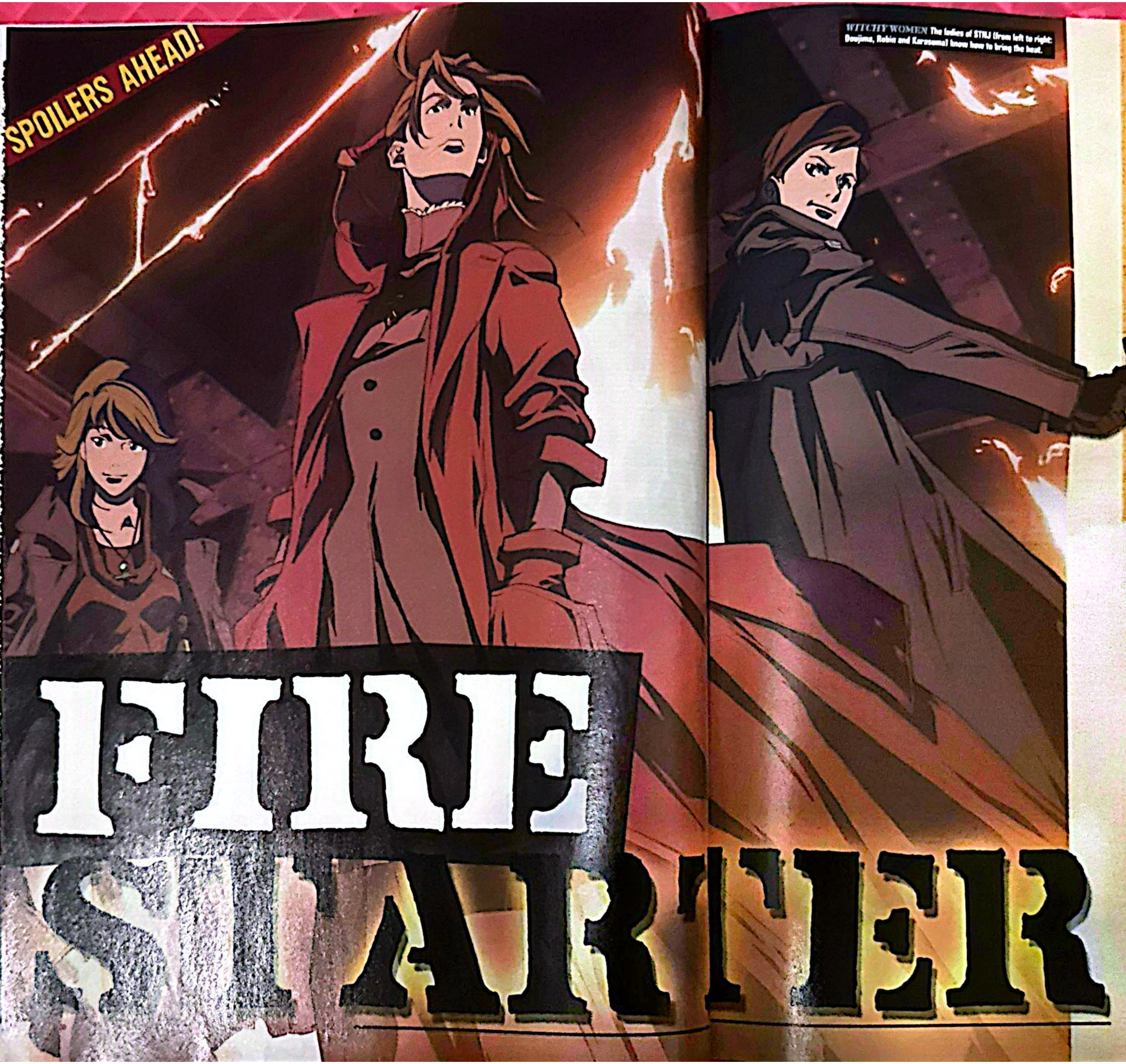


SPOILERS AHEAD!

WITCHY WOMEN The ladies of STNJ (from left to right: Doujima, Robin and Karasuma) know how to bring the heat.

FIRE STARTER

PERSECUTION, BETRAYAL AND BLACK MAGIC. DARE TO UNEARTH THE SECRETS OF 'WITCH HUNTER ROBIN'

BY ZAC BERTSCHY

You're out of breath, running as fast as you can down the grimy city streets. You turn, firing a psychokinetic blast at your pursuers—an impressive display of powerful Craft skill. Suddenly you're surrounded by a burst of flame, and from the center of the inferno comes the porcelain-white face of a young girl, dressed entirely in black.

That's what it's like to face Robin, the central character in Bandai's newest gothic thriller, *Witch Hunter Robin*. The show centers around STNJ (acronym unknown), an organization in Japan that hunts witches using mysterious Orbo bullets.

There's more to this than meets the eye, though; Robin carries a terrible secret that even she doesn't know about, and the STNJ itself has a sinister ulterior motive! Who's working for whom? Why does Robin have her power? What happens to the witches after they're hauled off?

Questions like these made *Witch Hunter Robin* a smash hit in Japan in September of 2002. Each episode kept its fans foaming at the mouth eager to learn about the horrifying secrets that lay within.

SPOILER ALERT! YOU CAN LEARN THE ANSWERS HERE IF YOU DARE–BUT IF YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW, STOP READING AND WAIT UNTIL BANDAI RELEASES THE DELUXE DVD IN OCTOBER OF THIS YEAR. OTHERWISE FOLLOW ALONG AS WE SPELL OUT THE SECRETS OF *WITCH HUNTER ROBIN*.

TCH HUNTER ROBIN: EPISODE GUIDE

SPOILER ALERT

1. REPLACEMENT

The STNJ has a new team member—Craft user Robin Sena who wields power over flames. Joined by angsty ace hunter Amon, Craft-using Karasuma, rookie Sakaki, slacker Doujima, expert hacker Michael and commanded by Zaizen, Robin's well-timed flames take down a witch who's immune to the power of the Orbo bullets!
WHAT'S HIS PROBLEM? Amon takes an instant dislike to young Robin and how carelessly she uses her powers.

2. ADDICTED TO POWER

Kazuya Misawa has been acquitted of killing his partner, but STNJ's files list him as a witch who may kill again! A sting operation corners him in a dark chapel where his crafty counter-attack almost crushes the STNJ agents to death.
CRAFTY MOMENT: Misawa can literally crush people's organs from the inside through telekinesis. Ouch!

3. DANCING IN DARKNESS

The STNJ deals with Kazuma Kurata, a witch who has to feast on the souls of living witches in order to remain eternally young. The team takes Kurata down but not before he unleases a swarm of soul-eating insects.
DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS: Michael reveals that he was blackmailed into working for STNJ after being caught hacking into the computers.

4. STUBBORN AESTHETICS

Robin investigates a string of unsolved murders, connecting them to a girl named Sayoko who flies into a homicidal rage when Robin comes nosing around! Thanks to glasses that Amon gave her, Robin's able to perfect her aim and she's able to fend off the attacking girl!

5. SMELLS LIKE THE WANDERING SPIRIT

An unnamed witch is using the deadly Single Eye technique to instill his victims with fear, sending them into paranoid tantrums! Karasuma and Sakaki try and track down the witch responsible, but are unable to turn anything up. The witch goes free—this time.
WHAT'S HIS PROBLEM, PART 2: Even though he helped her refine her powers, Amon still refuses to work fully with Robin

6. RAINDROPS

Robin and Karasuma investigate a schizophrenic girl named Chie whose abusive boss dies in a car accident; Amon goes to the girl's residence, only to be attacked by Chie's deadly Craft-possessed dolls!

7. SIMPLE MIND

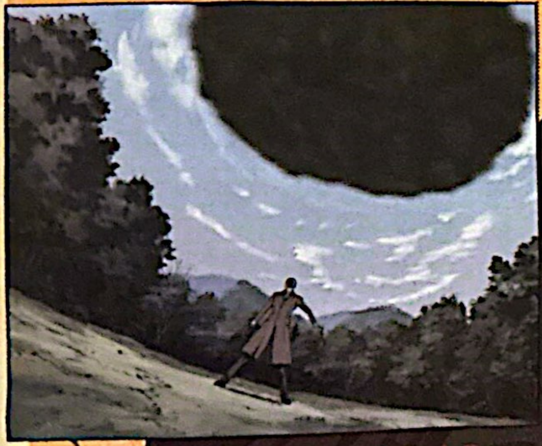
The STNJ is hot on the trail of Tsuneo Tazawa, a thief who's suspected of using his Craft power to steal 20 million yen. Robin and Sakaki discover instead Tazawa's nephew Mamoru, who turns out to be the witch himself! Before he can kill his uncle for attempting to take the money, the STNJ arrives and sends Mamoru packing.

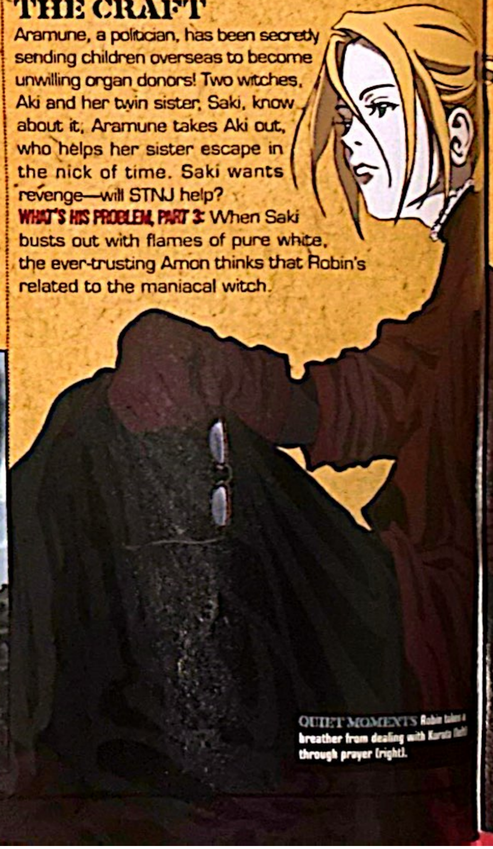
8. FAITH

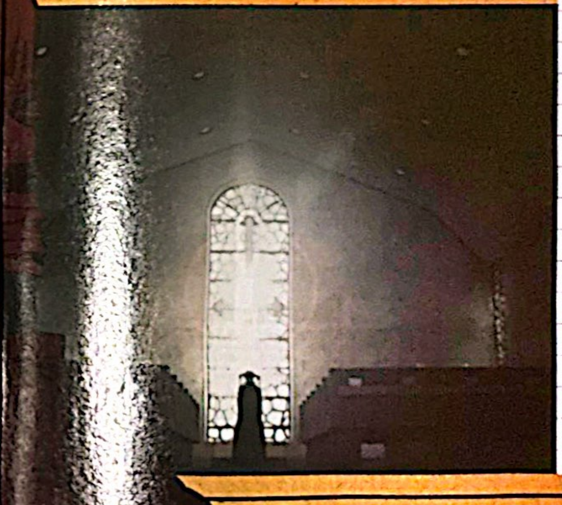
Kurosawa has the amazing Craft power to heal the sick, but must take the life energy from a living human, supplied by his accomplice Kirihara. It's the perfect crime until Robin confronts them about the deaths. Kirihara's attacks leaves all three in mortal peril!

9. SIGN OF THE CRAFT

Aramune, a politician, has been secretly sending children overseas to become unwilling organ donors! Two witches, Aki and her twin sister, Saki, know about it; Aramune takes Aki out, who helps her sister escape in the nick of time. Saki wants revenge—will STNJ help?
WHAT'S HIS PROBLEM, PART 3: When Saki busts out with flames of pure white, the ever-trusting Amon thinks that Robin's related to the maniacal witch.







QUIET MOMENTS Robin takes a breather from dealing with Kurata (left) through prayer (right).

10. SEPARATE LIVES

Harry, owner of the café near headquarters, reveals that his long-lost son Yutaka was in fact a witch. Yutaka returns to confront his father, and wants to kill him, but his own death is imminent. Can they reconcile?
DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS: Harry betrayed his own son, reporting him to the STNJ; chances are Yukata didn't call on Father's Day.

11. THE SOUL CAGES

During an in vestigation on Jyuuzou Narumi, Robin is confronted by an old woman who speaks dire predictions. When they confront Narumi, the old woman draws an "X" in the ground with her cane that shuts his power off; the team strikes and takes Narumi out!

12. PRECIOUS ILLUSIONS

Robin investigates the old woman and discovers that she's the Methuselah—an immortal witch from the Salem Witch trials. The old woman reveals that Robin's blood flows with the power of a thousand dead witches but Robin denies her heritage. After the Methuselah disappears, she leaves behind a relic for Robin: her cane, which may be the source of all Craft power!

13. THE EYES OF TRUTH

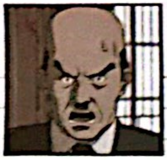
Robin and Amon meet with Inquisitor Koushon who's there to test an unstable Craft user named Masuda. The inquiry unleashes the evil inside Masuda, who kills two muggers. Robin is forced to turn Masuda into ashes, and flashes back to her own inquisition, where it was revealed that her overwhelming power will one day cast the world into darkness. Yikes!

14. LOADED GUNS

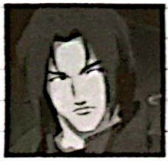
Lured into a trap, Robin returns home to a rain of gunfire from outside her apartment window, narrowly missing her and her roommate. She barely escapes with her life, while we see Amon stands on the balcony, reprimanded by Zaizen for not following orders—what the heck is going on here?!

ROBIN'S 'HOOD

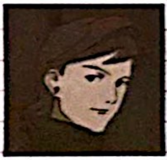
MEET THE HUNTERS OF STNJ



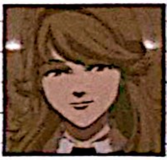
CHIEF KOSAKA The STNJ's balding, easily-angered captain commands his team from the comfort of his desk. Know for his short temper and commitment to his job, his team begrudgingly gives him the respect he demands.



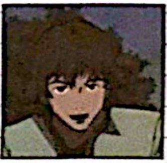
AMON The token brooding bishonen, Amon is the STNJ's superstar hunter, with more successful witch hunts than anyone else on the team. He doesn't trust Robin, and he isn't afraid to show it.



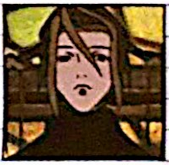
KARASUMA A witch with the ability to sense right and wrong, Karasuma is the most senior hunter at the STNJ next to Amon. While she and Amon make a good team, she's been partnered with Sakaki.



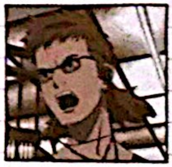
DOUJIMA Every office has a slacker. Ever a day late and a dollar short, what Doujima lacks in hunting skills, she makes up for through improving team morale. Not the best hunter, but still a necessary component, Doujima has her own secrets.



SAKAKI Unsure of himself and inexperienced, Sakaki lacks any special powers but keeps rolling forward in spite of his mistakes. Sakaki is a valuable hunter nevertheless and takes his job very seriously.



ROBIN Sent to the STNJ by Solomon to capture witches, Robin uses her amazing pyrokinetic powers to take out the bad guys. Naive and good-natured, Robin lives in the shadow of her failed predecessors.



MICHAEL Michael was the world's top hacker, before he got caught. He now works for the STNJ as their resident information provider, giving the team all the necessary facts for each mission. As part of his probation, Michael is not allowed to leave the office for any reason. ■ ZB

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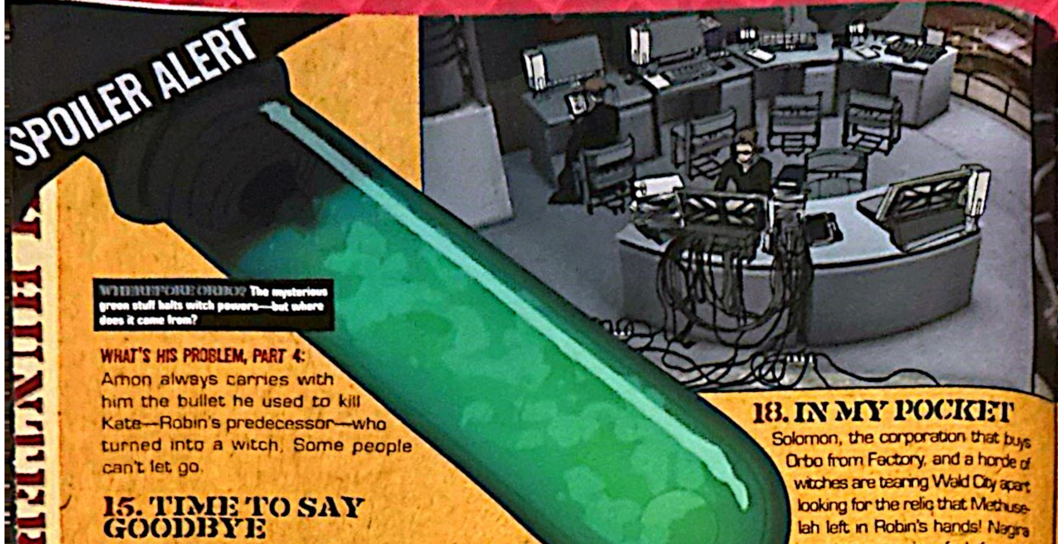


WHEREFORE ORBO? The mysterious green stuff halts witch powers—but where does it come from?

WHAT'S HIS PROBLEM, PART 4: Amon always carries with him the bullet he used to kill Kate—Robin's predecessor—who turned into a witch. Some people can't let go.

15. TIME TO SAY GOODBYE

When the team investigates the strange attack on Robin, the evidence points to Amon being behind it. Just then, a SWAT team invades the STNJ and guns down the gang. Amon shows up in the nick of time and helps Robin escape. He explains that he's been ordered to hunt Robin due to her powers, but he won't do it. Amon shoves Robin to safety only to be brought down in a hail of bullets!

16. HEAL THE PAIN

Michael, Sakaki, Karasuma and Doujima are all back at work, licking their wounds and confused. They speculate that the SWAT team invaded to capture Robin, but nobody knows for sure—or where Amon and Zaizen disappeared. Robin is now hiding out working as a courier for Nagira, a lawyer friend of Amon's. Doujima then runs across Robin, who she is delighted to see alive.

17. DILEMMA

Nagira asks Robin to babysit a girl with dormant Craft power whose mother is being hidden from the Factory. She's discovered by Doujima, who begs Robin to help the STNJ with their caseload; Robin reluctantly agrees.

18. IN MY POCKET

Solomon, the corporation that buys Orbo from Factory, and a horde of witches are tearing Wald City apart looking for the relic that Methuselah left in Robin's hands! Nagira investigates running afoul of a witch called The Professor. Robin saves the day—and Nagira's neck—revealing that she's been carrying the relic with her all this time and it's been boosting her powers.

19. MISSING

While Zaizen retreats further into the Factory, Robin is introduced to a pair of witch experts who examine the relic but can't determine its significance. When the witch experts are captured by Factory, Robin reveals that her job as a hunter was a cover-up for her real mission: she's an operative sent by Solomon to collect the relic!

20. ALL I REALLY OUGHTA KNOW

Sastre, Solomon's mega-poweful witch hunter, is hunting Robin! They fight a grueling battle, during which Robin discovers that the ultimate Craft technique—the power to control the elements—was hidden inside her, not the cane! Robin uses the new technique to blow Sastre and his silly moustache into cinders.

SPOILER ALERT

ROBIN IN REPOSE: Whether at the office (left) or drawing craft symbols (middle), Robin still has time for a little light brooding.

21. NO WAY OUT

Robin resolves to keep fighting for her humanity, in spite of being branded as a witch. Solomon sends an incredibly powerful witch hunter who traps Robin within an endless shadow. Robin escapes and defeats the hunter, but it takes all her willpower to resist his mental invasion.

CRAFTY MOMENT: The new hunter's Jedi Mind Trick invades Robin's mind, making her think she's trapped in a never-ending darkness.

22. FAMILY PORTRAIT

Zaizen and his Orbo-producing Factory defy Solomon and devise a new type of Orbo that makes regular humans immune to Craft power, but carries horrible side effects. Meanwhile, Nagira and Robin track down a man named Toudou, the genetic researcher for Solomon who invented Orbo, and discover a portrait of a girl who looks exactly like Robin. Weird.

23. SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

Confronting Robin, Amon tells her that he was ordered to hunt her by Father Juliano, the head hunter at Solomon and the man who raised Robin from childhood. Amon decides, however, that he can't go through with the gruesome act, and the two face off against Factory's new Orbo soldiers, who prove to be no match for Robin's deadly new powers.

SO THAT'S HIS PROBLEM: Amon reveals that mother was a witch! Yeah, you heard right...A WITCH! Also, Nagira is his brother! Aaaa! *The sky is falling!*

24. RENT

Zaizen intends to use his new Orbo-soldiers to destroy witches and witch hunters alike—he's captured Karasuma! The STNJ team decides to infiltrate Zaizen's operation to save her. Zaizen intends to capture a scientist who worked with Toudou, but the STNJ team gets there first. The scientist Toudou had a secret project, and was married to a witch.

DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS: Doujima admits that she was sent by Solomon to send back info about the STNJ's actions. Can she be trusted now?

25. REDEMPTION DAY

Father Juliano shows up at the STNJ and tells Robin that she's the result of Toudou's experiments—and Juliano's granddaughter! Robin decides to join Amon, Doujima, Sakaki, and Nagira as they infiltrate Factory to save Karasuma. There they discover that Zaizen has been using the captured witches as living crops, harvesting them to create Orbo!

26. TIME TO TELL

The team must find Karasuma and escape from the Factory before it's destroyed by Solomon. An encrypted message left behind by Toudou reveals that Robin is the first "perfect" witch, intended to lead humanity forward. Orbo's side effects have gotten hold of Zaizen and he starts to break down. The team escapes intact, but Amon and Robin are nowhere to be found.

When Phoenix-based freelance writer Zac Bartschy is used as a living crop, he yields a goodly portion of Dr. Pepper.

BLACK MAGIC WOMEN

HOW DOES ROBIN STACK UP AGAINST HER PEERS THROUGHOUT HISTORY?

1. **The Wicked Witch of the West:** She might be weak against water, but she commands an army of flying monkeys. FLYING MONKEYS.

2. **Robin Sena:** The STNJ's premier butt-kicking, fire-wielding witch has it going on.

3. **Kiki:** Complete with wisecracking black cat *sidekick*, Kiki's broom *handling skills* are second to none.

4. **Hermione Granger:** Hogwarts' red-headed overachiever could waste that Potter kid any day of the week.

5. **The Blair Witch:** Her 15 minutes of fame are long over, but you'll always be terrified of standing in corners.

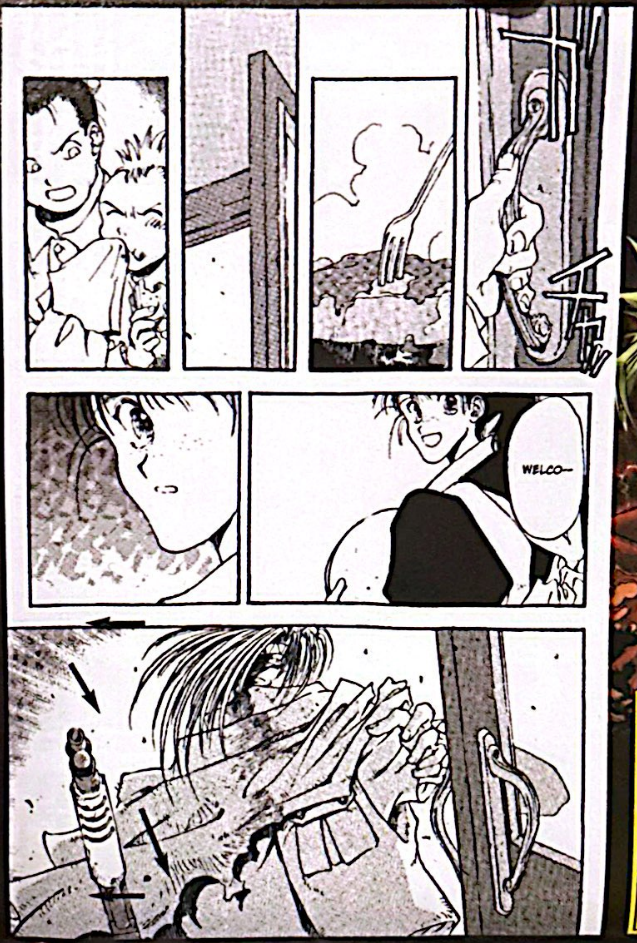
6. **Evil L[illegible]**eletor's back-stabbing [illegible]h commands an arse[illegible] magic spells big enou[illegible] give He-Man a serio[illegible]dache. Too bad her [illegible] never, ever pan out.

7. **Sae Sawanoguchi:** Reluctant powerhouse of the Magic User's Club, Sae almost singlehandedly saved the earth from invading aliens.

8. **Magica DeSpell:** Scrooge McDuck can't hold on to his money forever, and this web-footed witch will make sure he doesn't.

9. **Sabrina, The Teenage Witch:** Okay, so her black cat is lame, and she hangs out with her aunts. She's still better than...

10. **Wendy Witch:** Harvey Comics' lame preteen hex slinger pals around with lame preteen ghost, Casper. The adventures they share have all the excitement of watching glue dry. ZB



START HERE

THE 'ANIME INSIDER' PREVIEW OF

TRIGUN

The long-awaited U.S. adaptation is coming from Dark Horse—but we've got it first!

By Yasuhiro Nightow

In true Vash the Stampede fashion, the *Trigun* manga is starting with a bang!

Dark Horse Comics' English translation arrives in stores on October 8, but *Anime Insider* scored a special sneak preview just for you, our loyal readers! But before you devour the following pages, some important details:

For starters, you'll be reading right-to-left, top-to-bottom (see diagram at left)—just like in Japan. Explains editor Tim Ervin-Gore: "This is Dark Horse's first use of the right-to-left format, but we'll be publishing a lot more manga in that format soon," he says, due to reader demand. Also, the sound effects remain Japanese, another Dark Horse concession to purists.

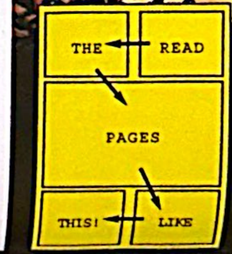
Dark Horse will release *Trigun* as 5-by-7-inch *tankubon* size trade paperbacks, at around 360 pages a pop! The second volume's due in January, and the release schedule should be approximately quarterly from there.

So what awaits readers who keep reading this "action comedy manga" beyond our preview? Mystery abounds! "The true draw of *Trigun* is the fact that slowly, over time, you'll find out how this nice and goofy gunslinger has such a nasty reputation," Ervin-Gore says. "I'm looking forward to learning more about Vash myself. Like why he's worth 60 billion double dollars dead! The truth might be surprising!"

The first page of our preview starts shortly into the first chapter. Vash enters a tavern while a gang after the bounty on him gathers outside.

So sit back, relax, and enjoy a little bit of Trigun.

TOM ROOT



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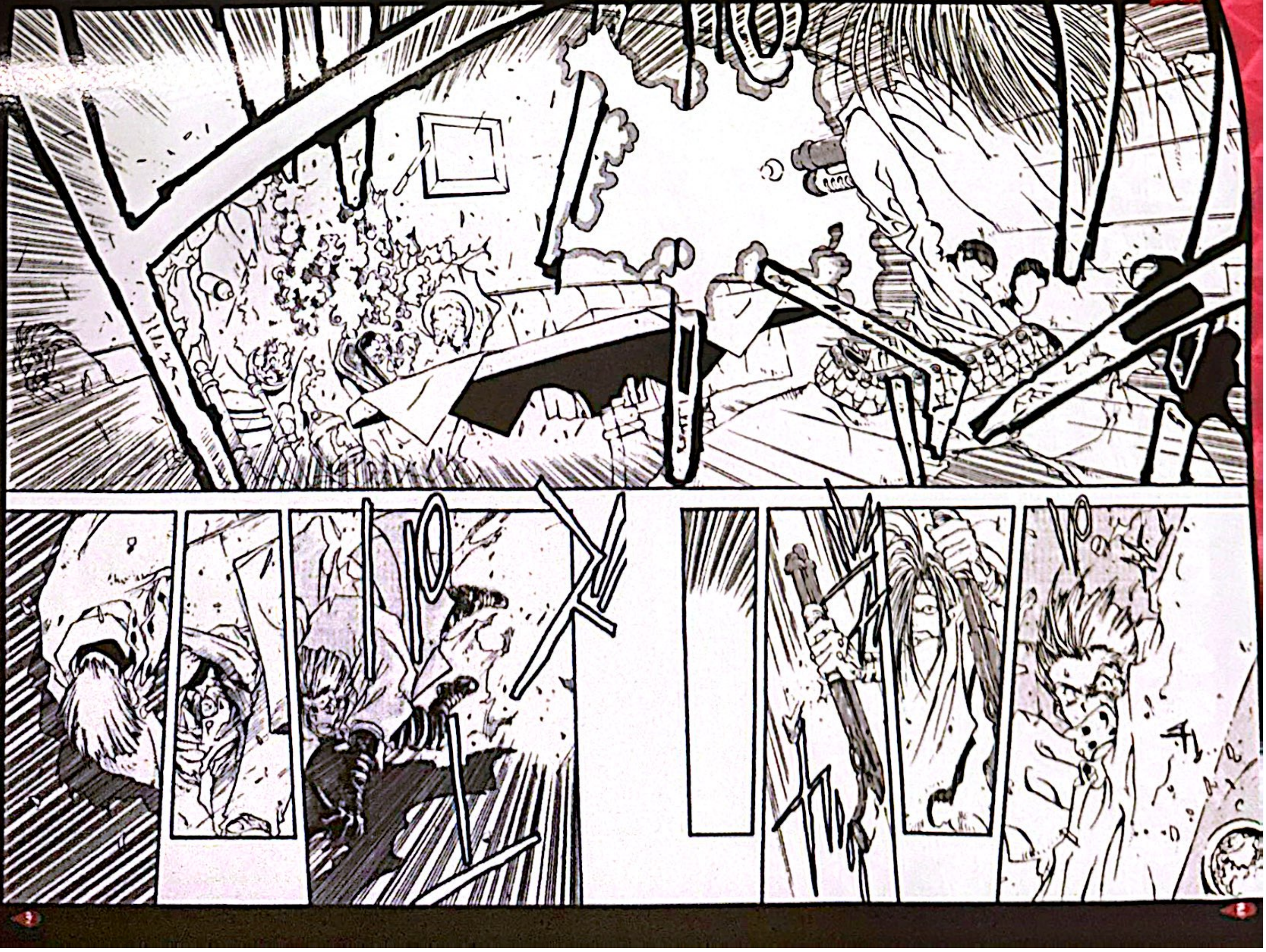

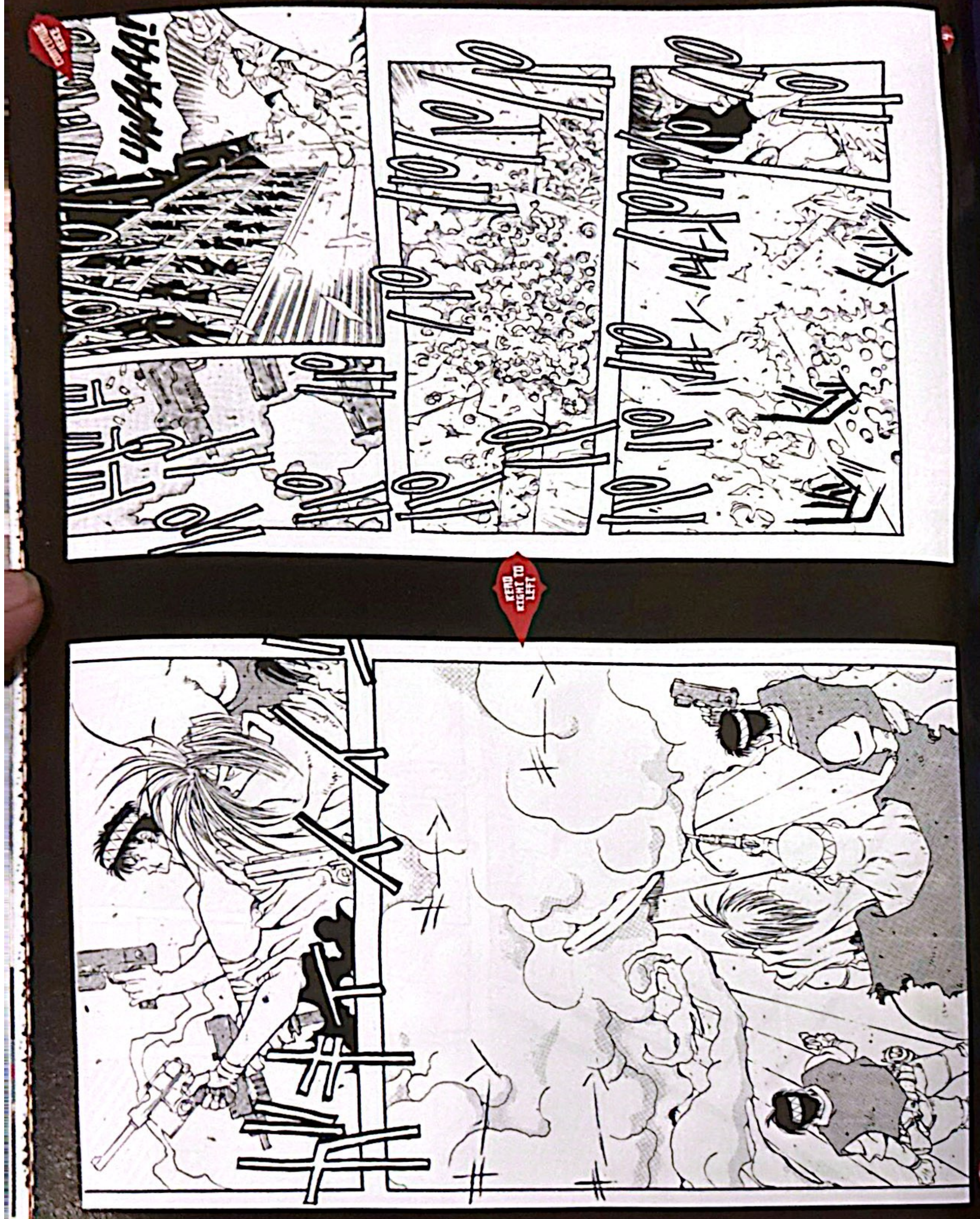

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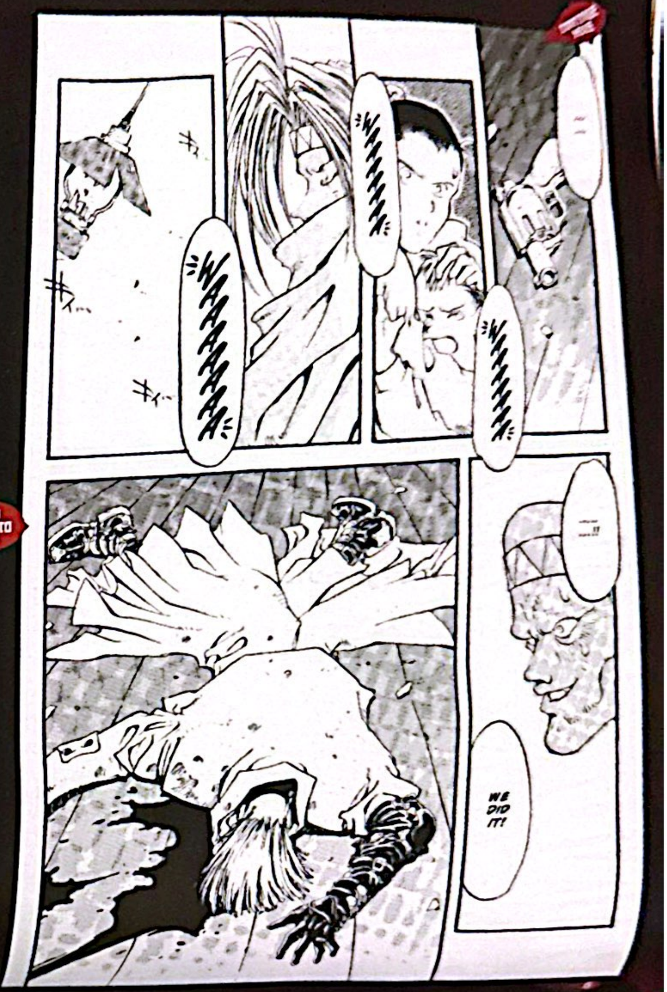
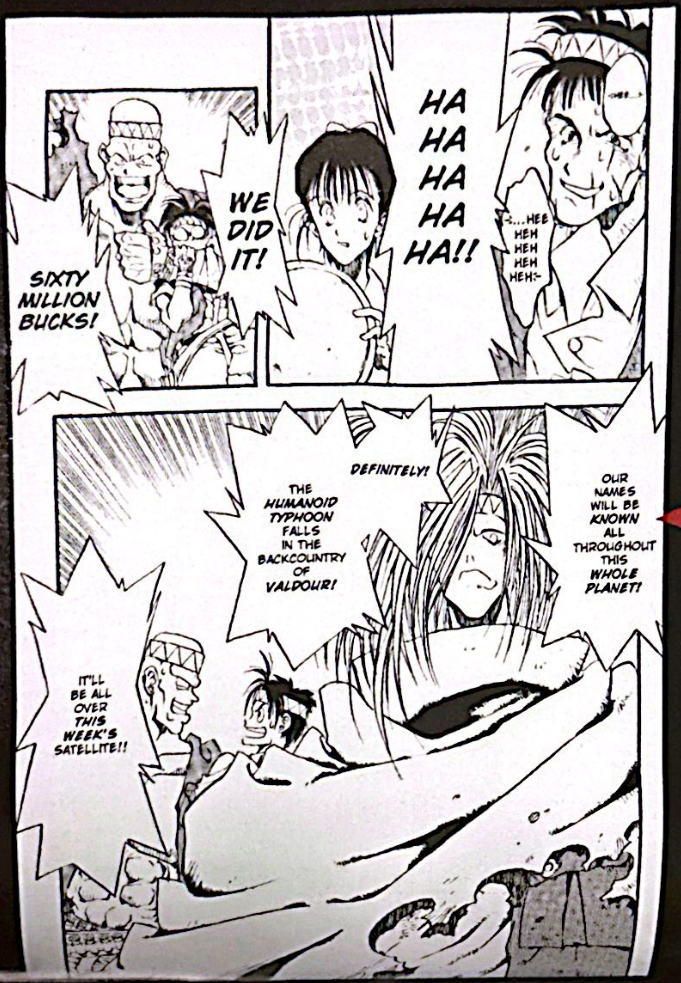
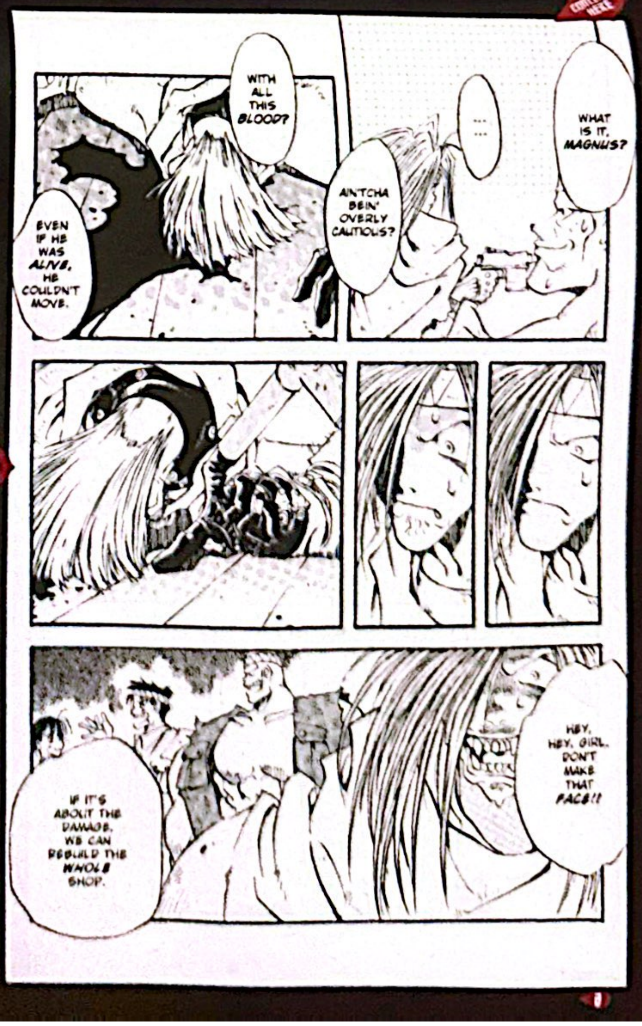

—
WAAAAAA!
WAAAAAAAAA!
キィ
キィ…
キィー
WAAAAAA!
—!!
WE DID IT!

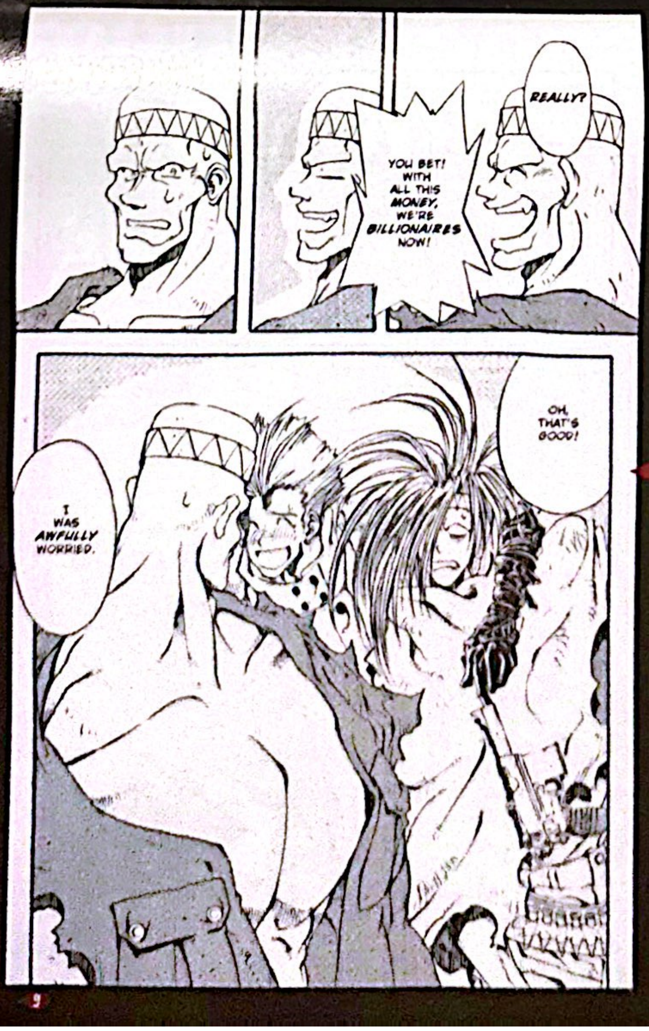
READ RIGHT TO LEFT


…HEE HEH HEH HEH HEH!
HA HA HA HA HA!!
WE DID IT!
SIXTY MILLION BUCKS!
OUR NAMES WILL BE KNOWN ALL THROUGHOUT THIS WHOLE PLANET!
DEFINITELY!
THE HUMANOID TYPHOON FALLS IN THE BACKCOUNTRY OF VALDOUR!
IT'LL BE ALL OVER THIS WEEK'S SATELLITE!!

CONTINUE HERE


WHAT IS IT, MAGNUS?
… …
AIN'TCHA BEIN' OVERLY CAUTIOUS?
WITH ALL THIS BLOOD?
EVEN IF HE WAS ALIVE, HE COULDN'T MOVE.
HEY, HEY, GIRL, DON'T MAKE THAT FACE!!
IF IT'S ABOUT THE DAMAGE, WE CAN REBUILD THE WHOLE SHOP.

READ RIGHT TO LEFT


REALLY?
YOU BET! WITH ALL THIS MONEY, WE'RE BILLIONAIRES NOW!
OH, THAT'S GOOD!
I WAS AWFULLY WORRIED.

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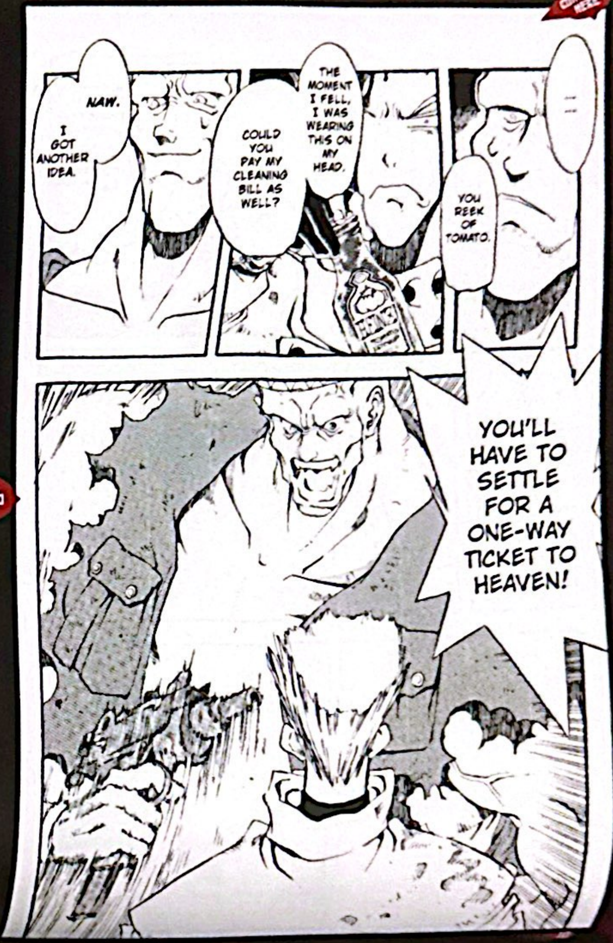
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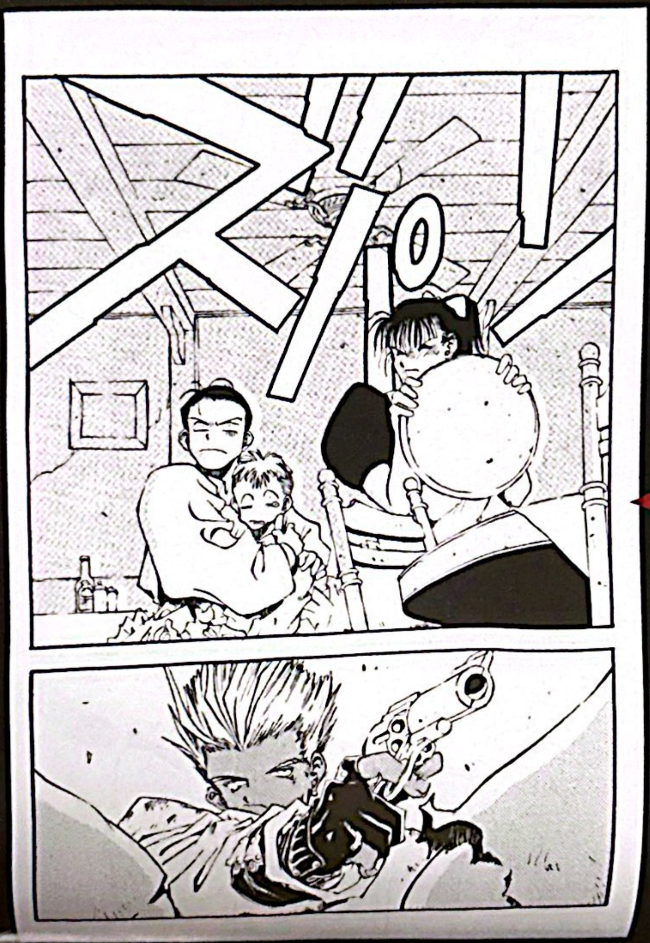
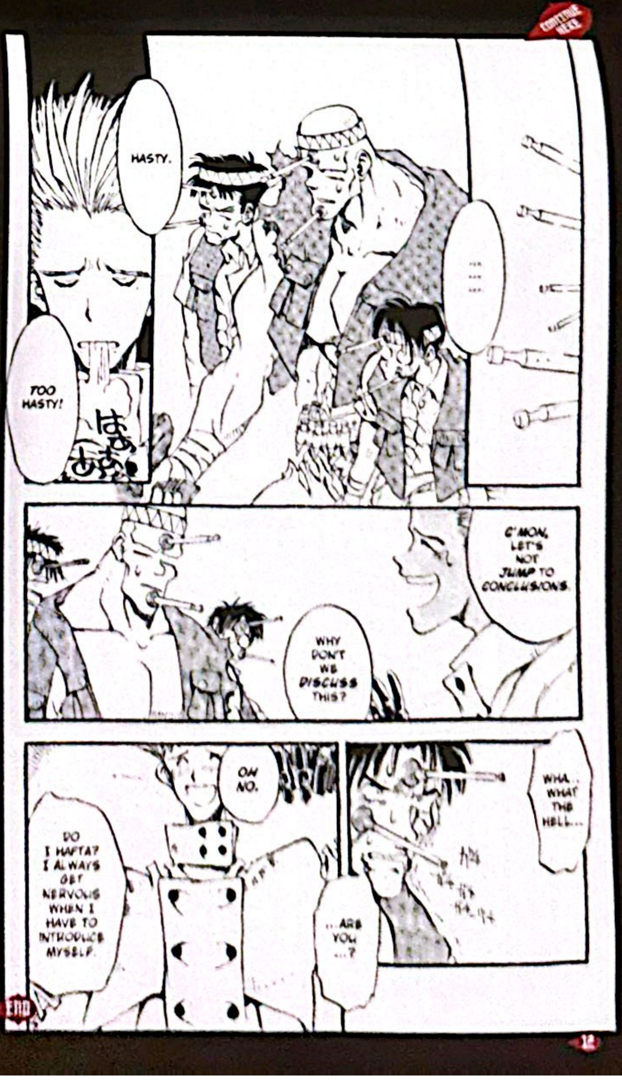
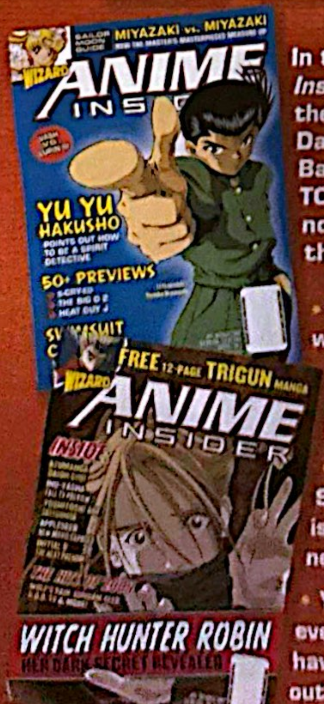
…
YOU REEK OF TOMATO.
THE MOMENT I FELL, I WAS WEARING THIS ON MY HEAD.
COULD YOU PAY MY CLEANING BILL AS WELL?
NAW.
I GOT ANOTHER IDEA.
YOU'LL HAVE TO SETTLE FOR A ONE-WAY TICKET TO HEAVEN!




CONTINUE HERE
HASTY.
TOO HASTY!
…
…
…
C'MON, LET'S NOT JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS.
WHY DON'T WE DISCUSS THIS?
WHA… WHAT THE HELL…
OH NO.
DO I HAFTA? I ALWAYS GET NERVOUS WHEN I HAVE TO INTRODUCE MYSELF.
…ARE YOU …?
END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WITCH HUNTER ROBIN
HER DARK SECRET REVEALED

MORE MANGA TO COME!

In the next issues of *Anime Insider*, you'll find previews to the Hellsing manga from Dark Horse and Fruits Basket manga from TOKYOPOP. Subscribe now and you'll also get these benefits:

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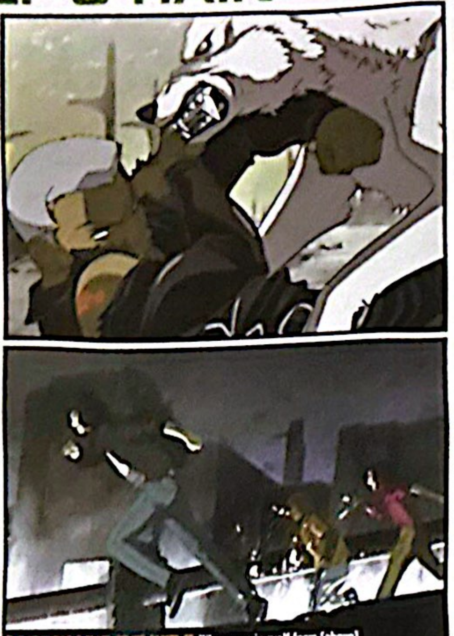
SHOWN TO THE WOLVES

'BEBOP' CREW GETS CAUGHT IN THE 'WOLF'S RAIN'

There may not be any more *Cowboy Bebop* on the horizon, but fans can stop howling at the moon—Bandai Entertainment is bringing out *Wolf's Rain* in 2004, and it's an unofficial re-teaming of the *Bebop* crew, including animation house Studio Bones, *Bebop* movie director Tensai Okamura, character designer Toshihiro Kawamoto and renowned composer Yoko Kanno.

Since *Wolf's Rain* debut at the beginning of 2003, it has become as critically acclaimed as *Bebop*. In a dystopian future, war has ravaged the countryside and forced the remaining human populace inside gigantic, filthy mechanical metropolises. Living among the humans are the last of the wolves, a species thought to have been hunted to extinction. Though only a few wolves remain, they've figured out how to blend in by appearing as humans. Legend says that only wolves will be able to sniff out Paradise, a land rich with life and the promise of happiness, so the humans have hunted them down in search of answers.

Enter Kiba, a lone wolf who claims he can smell the flowers of Paradise; joining him are Tsume, a cynical pack leader who doesn't trust Kiba's sense of smell and begrudges him the position of alpha male, Hige, a laid-back wolf with an eye for the females; and Toboe, an optimistic puppy who believes in Kiba's destiny. Together, they seek the Moon Flower, the legendary guide to paradise. If the entire world weren't after the four of them, they'd have a much easier time finding it.



HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF Kiba, seen in wolf form (above) and human form (below), loves fighting, running and Milkbones.

"Whenever you put Studio Bones and Yoko Kanno together on a project, you can expect great things to happen," says Bandai marketing manager Jerry Chu. "There hasn't been an anime television series since *Escaflowne* and *Cowboy Bebop* that has truly captivated and mesmerized audiences with its detailed animation, engaging storyline, and astounding musical score. But *Wolf's Rain* will."

With such a pedigree, *Wolf's Rain* is already one of the most anticipated anime releases of 2004. And while it's still not *Bebop*, *Wolf's Rain* could still be the leader of the pack.

■ Zac Bertschy

FAST FORWARD

QUICK PEEKS AT THE NEXT BIG VIDEOS

SAMURAI SEASON Media Blasters has announced they'll be releasing their *Rurouni Kenshin* series on box sets, divided up by story arc (which also happens to correspond to the "seasons" as shown on Cartoon Network's Toonami block). No date is set, but they should be out around the end of the year.

STANDING ALONE Those waiting patiently for *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*, announced by Bandai Entertainment last year, have to wait a little while longer. Bandai's Marketing Manager Jerry Chu confirmed it wouldn't reach DVD until 2004, likely in the Spring.

D GOES DELUXE Urban Vision has announced a new Special Edition of the already reasonably special *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust* film. The only known extra feature will be a Japanese audio track; the original DVD only had English audio, as the film was created and released (both in America and Japan) in English. ■ ZB

VAMPIRE HUNTER D: BLOODLUST

ULTRAMAN
TIGA

ELECTRIFYING, CITY-SMASHING, MONSTER-BASHING ACTION!

THE ORIGINAL
SCI-FI SUPER-HERO
COMES TO
DARK HORSE!

PRESENTING THE
RED-HOT SERIES
FROM HONG KONG,
TRANSLATED IN
ENGLISH FOR THE
FIRST TIME!

BY TONY WONG AND
KHOO FUK LUNG
COVERS BY UDON!

AUGUST 2003
THROUGH MAY 2004

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ON THE SHELF

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR ANIME STORES THIS FALL?

SEPTEMBER

ANIMATION RUNNER KUROMI
Kuromi just landed her dream job at animation studio Petit! Little did she know that the studio she revered so much is staffed by a bunch of slackers! It's up to Kuromi to meet the deadlines and get the studio's latest cartoon out to drooling fans everywhere. (Central Park Media, DVD, $29.99)

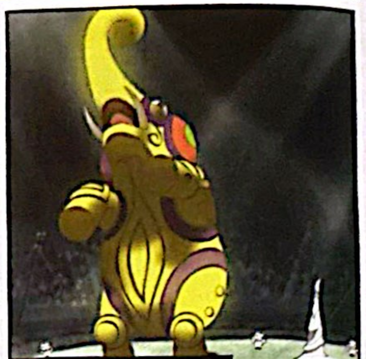
BIG O COLLECTOR'S SET
All 13 episodes of Roger Smith's noir-ish adventures with his Megadeus robot, The Big O, in one set! Catch the thrilling first season to prime yourself for the sequel this fall! Watch Roger outwit, outlast and outpunch his foes, and try to unravel the mysteries of Paradigm City. (Bandai, DVD, $44.98)

BLUE SEED: BEYOND
The entire *Blue Seed* sequel OVA in one collected volume! A scientist revives the Aragami and it's up to the old team from the Terrestrial Administration Center to stop the madman before it's too late! (ADV Films, DVD, $29.98)

BOYS OVER FLOWERS VOL.1
Makino goes to an elite private school where she's considered poor and is bullied every day. But when the school's most popular boys decide to give her a shot, Makino's world turns upside down! (Viz, DVD, $24.98)

BRIGADOON VOL. 3
More and more dark secrets of Marin and Melan's strange world are uncovered. Learn the truth behind Creis Marin and Marin Asagi, and follow Marin and Melan to a bizarre world called Submaton Color. (TOKYOPOP, DVD, $29.98)

CARDCAPTOR SAKURA VOL. 17
Sakura is destined to finally reveal her feelings to Li, but she becomes confused when Yukito confronts her about it. She whisks away to the past to visit Clow Reed, father of the Clow cards, for some relationship advice! (Pioneer, DVD, $29.98)


ELEPHANT ON PARADE This is as normal as *Cat Soup* gets. Really.

CAT SOUP
A unique and bizarre title about Nyatta, a kitten whose soul is stolen. He and his sister traverse a nightmarish dream world scouring for the kitty's lost soul; it's a journey through the mind's eye unlike anything ever seen. (Central Park Media, DVD)

CERES, CELESTIAL LEGEND COLLECTOR'S BOX VOL. 1
The first half of the thrilling *Ceres, Celestial Legend* TV series in one box! Thrill to the adventures of Aya Ceres and her dramatic struggles against the power that lies inside her very soul. Created by Yuu Watase (*Fushigi Yuugi*). (Central Park Media, DVD, $99.98)

CHOBITS VOL. 4
Chi, Hideki and the rest of the crew vacation on the beach, but something's amiss, Shinbo seems depressed, and to Hideki's surprise, Ms. Shimizu invites herself over to his place after an evening of drinking! (Pioneer, DVD, $29.98)

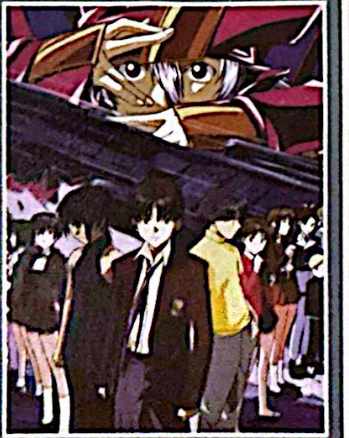
CORRECTOR YUI VOL. 2
More adventures with Yui inside the virtual realm where she takes on the malicious program Grosser and his legions of digital minions. Anything can happen in Cyberspace, and with Yui on the job, it usually does! (Viz, DVD, $24.98)

COSMO WARRIOR ZERO BOX SET
Zero is a war hero, controlled by the victors of an intergalactic conflict, and ordered to hunt down his best friend, Captain Harlock. (Media Blasters, DVD, $39.95)

HOT PICK

INFINITE RYVIUS VOL. 1

October 21st on DVD, $29.98, Bandai Entertainment



In space, no one can hear you scream, but can they hear you angst? Bandai's *Infinite Ryvius* answers that question by providing a bevy of cosmically-bound teenagers who endure a series of life-threatening and bizarre events, and the result is one of the best sci-fi anime series ever. The story revolves around Aiba Kouji and Houshin Aoi, two teenagers on board the space station Liebe Delta. The Delta gets trapped in a nebulous gravity anomaly and the kids are forced to board the Ryvius, an experimental space ship that lay hidden inside! Forced to defend themselves from enemy attackers using the Battle Guard (the giant robot onboard the Ryvius), life never gets easy for the adolescent crew. You can expect to see each character's most intimate thoughts laid bare. *Infinite Ryvius* found its popularity in Japan because of its gripping storyline and unsurpassable character development. With character designs by white-hot designer Hisashi Hirai, responsible for the look of both *Gundam SEED* and Bandai's other big action series *s-CRY-ed*, *Infinite Ryvius* is a gripping look into the dark psyche of the human mind...with giant robots and cute girls, too. ■ ZB

DRAGON BALL Z: FUSION BOX SET
It's an all-out brawl to the finish when Goku and his team of burly fighters take on Buu, their most powerful enemy yet. Goku powers up, but is it enough to stop this wicked alien menace? (Pioneer; DVD, $99.98)

DRAGON BALL: GENERAL BLUE BOX SET
Goku and pals try to beat the nefarious Red Ribbon Army in collecting all the Dragon Balls, but General Blue can control people's bodies! Includes a surprise visit by Toriyama's earlier anime *Dr. Slump!* (FUNimation, DVD, $39.98)

DOOMED MEGALOPOLIS
Masakato, the legendary protector of Tokyo, has been reborn in response to the wicked mage Kato's plans for conquering the city. Kato's powerful magic clashes with Masakato and his ragtag team of unlikely heroes in this classic horror anime. (ADV Films, DVD, $29.98)

FIGURE 17 VOL. 1
Join the ever-reluctant Tsubasa and Hikaru as they struggle with the rigors of daily school life...and a terrifying alien invasion. (Media Blasters, DVD, $29.95)

GENESHAFT VOL. 3
The Bilkis is in serious trouble. The shaft is still having problems combating the incoming aliens, the captain's in a coma, and to top it all off, there's a terrorist on board and nobody knows who it is! (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

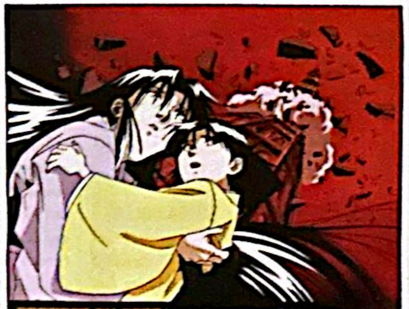
GENMA WARS VOL. 4
The people of Mah have finally organized against the demon lord, but it's up to Jin and Loof to work together to lead them to victory. The twin brothers have locked horns in the past, but their ability to band together now will determine the fate of their people. (Media Blasters, DVD, $24.95)

GREAT TEACHER ONIZUKA VOL. 10
Onizuka makes a powerful decision to come to the distraught Miyabi's aid. What results is the ultimate test of Onizuka's will. Will he really become the greatest teacher in history? The stirring conclusion! (TOKYOPOP, DVD, $29.98)

.HACK//SIGN VOL. 4
Tsukasa disappears after the fight in the upside-down castle, and when he reappears, he's missing parts of his memory! Is this the real Tsukasa, or just a facsimilie created by The World? (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

HEAT GUY J VOL. 2
Daisuke and Android J take on their toughest cybernetic opponents yet on the rough and tumble streets of Judoh City. Android J operates as Daisuke's trump card, walloping the criminal element wherever it may show up! (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

INITIAL D VOL. 1
The first volume of one of the hottest anime series ever races on to DVD for the first time in America! Join ace driver Tak and his 86 Trueno as they drift around the corners to become the biggest street racing sensation Japan has ever seen. (TOKYOPOP, DVD, $19.98)


DESTINED BY FATE We don't want to spoil this scene from *Doomed Megalopolis*, but these people are doomed.

JOJO'S BIZARRE ADVENTURE VOL. 4
Jotaro's fight against the nefarious vampire Dio continues. Can Jotaro and his gang of powerful "Stand" users overcome the bloodsucking madman's maniacal machinations, or is it too late? (Super Techno Arts, DVD, $24.95)

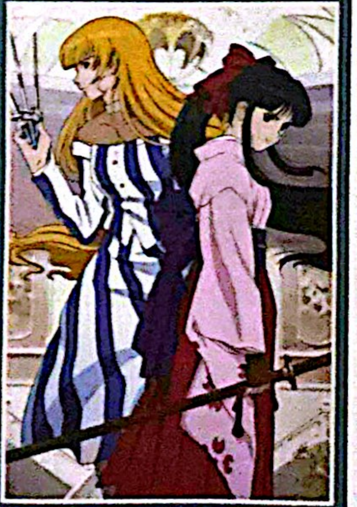
NOIR VOL. 6
The penultimate volume of *Noir* answers many questions but raises even more mysteries! What is the secret behind the Soldats organization and what is Kirika's connection to it? Can Mirelle figure it out before it's too late? (ADV Films, DVD, $29.98)

PLEASE, TEACHER VOL. 3
Newlyweds Kei and Mizuho's relationship is tested by a series of misunderstandings; Koishi sets up an ill-fated love confession, and Kei chokes on jealousy when Mizuho agrees to help Matagu with his homework. (Pioneer, DVD, $29.98)

HOT PICK

SAKURA WARS: THE MOVIE LIMITED EDITION

September 9th on DVD, $39.98, Pioneer Animation



So what's better than a bevy of hot girls piloting robots? A feature-length movie about a bevy of hot girls piloting robots, loaded with special features! Based on one of the biggest videogame series in Japan, *Sakura Wars: The Movie* finds the Imperial Fighting Troupe, lead by the feisty and beautiful Sakura, called upon once again to defend Tokyo from a horde of invading demons. This time, however, the Douglas-Stewart company has arrived with a new breed of fighting machine that threatens to make Sakura and her gang of fighting maidens obsolete! Can the troupe outwit, outlast and outfight the Douglas-Stewart company's new machine or will they be sent to the scrap heap? With animation by the always-amazing Production I.G., Sakura and her comrades are designed by *Oh! My Goddess*'s Kosuke Fujishima. Following a limited theatrical run in America, this DVD release features both English and Japanese audio in 5.1 Dolby Surround, original Japanese movie trailers and promotional videos for the upcoming *Sakura Wars* PlayStation2 videogame. The limited edition also includes a set of 10 miniature pencil boards! Start writing your congressman! ■ ZB

RANMA 1/2 RANDOM RHAPSODY BOX SET

The next amazing season of Ranma in a handsome collected box set. Join Ranma, Akane and the rest of the gang at the school of Anything Goes Martial Arts as they survive another season's worth of crazy trials and hilarious tribulations! (Viz, DVD, $119.98)

REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA VOL. 8

Nanami is faced with a terrifying decision; confronted with the awful truth about her brother, she flees her home in search of answers. Can Ohtori Academy's most obnoxious princess survive the outside world on her own? (Central Park Media, DVD, $29.98)

RUNE SOLDER VOL. 4

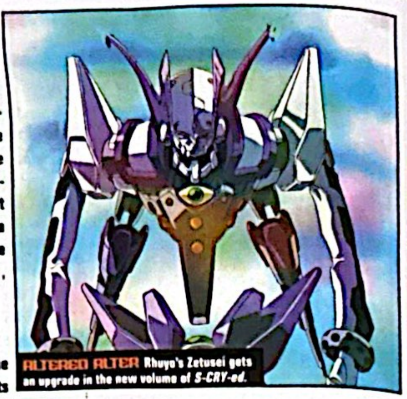
There may be an evil magician breeding an army of monsters to invade the country of Ohfun, and Louie's band of adventurers just might stumble across the evidence they need to prove it. (ADV Films, DVD, $29.98)

S-CRY-ED VOL. 2

Commander Zigmarl of HOLY is forced to order a roundup of every native Alter in the Lost Ground following a series of deadly attacks! Kimisha and Kazuma rally against their oppressors, putting together an Altar army to battle it out for total supremacy! (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

SORCERER HUNTERS: COMPLETE COLLECTION

The entire hilariously racy comedy available in one box set! Follow the misadventures of the ever-lustful Carrot and his stalwart companions Tira and Chocolate as they battle the forces of evil. (ADV Films, DVD, $59.98)



ALTERED ALTER Rhuyo's Zetusei gets an upgrade in the new volume of *S-CRY-ed.*

SPIRIT OF WONDER

Two collected short stories about the Scientific Boys Club and their attempts at traveling to Mars from their small hometown, Bristol. They involve the lovely and talented Miss China, who gets a little more than she bargained for. (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

SUPERGALS VOL. 1

Super-hip high school student Ran and her teen girl squad of fashion plates roam the streets of Shibuya shaking up trouble and looking *so good.* When a couple of Ko-gals cause problems for Ran and her friends, it's a battle for total supremacy! (ADV Films, DVD, $29.98)

TWELVE KINGDOMS VOL. 2

Yukoko's bizarre journey through the hostile and dangerous world of the Twelve Kingdoms continue. Her travels take her from village to village, and the secret of what lies inside her grows ever closer to the surface, threatening to consume her very soul. (Media Blasters, DVD, $29.98)

X VOL. 7

The penultimate volume of the *X* TV series finds Kamui and Fuma with locked swords, struggling to determine the fate of the earth. More answers are revealed; who will emerge victorious, and who will fall in the fateful battle? (Pioneer, DVD, $29.98)

YU-GI-OH! VOL. 13

Yugi's destined duels against Pegasus continue, with the very souls of his friends and family at stake. Can Yugi's gang keep it together long enough to achieve their goals? (FUNimation, DVD, $19.95)

YU YU HAKUSHO VOL. 16

Spirit Detective Yusuke has new powers, a new life and new problems. He's still dealing with the results of the battle between Genkai and Toguro, something that will strain him to the very end. (FUNimation, DVD, $24.98)

ZENKI VOL. 4

The complete fourth season of the *Zenki* TV series in a single two-disc set, collected for the first time on DVD. See the fate of Zenki and Chiaki, as their exciting adventures continue. (Media Blasters, DVD, $39.98)

HOT PICK

SAILOR MOON SEASON 2 UNCUT

September 23rd on DVD, $149.98, ADV Films

We couldn't help it. We're so excited about the second season of Sailor Moon uncut we had it make it a Hot Pick too. The entire second series of *Sailor Moon* (called *Sailor Moon R* in Japan) will be available in one complete 8-disc boxed set, collecting all 43 episodes, subtitled and totally uncensored. In the first half of the storyline, Usagi and her friends deal with the arrival of space aliens Ail and An, who are disguised as normal students. The second half heralds the arrival of the deadly Black Moon family (and the occasionally deadly Chibi-Usa, better known as Rini, Sailor Moon's future daughter). One of the villains, Dimando, is in love with Usagi and will stop at nothing to get her in his clutches! This is the first time these episodes have been made available uncensored, so get ready to see the characters with their original names (and genders), plus many scenes that never made it to American television. Hardcore Moonies have been waiting to get their hands on this season for a long time, as many consider it the best of the *Sailor Moon* TV series! ■ ZB

SAILOR MOON SEASON 2
セーラームーン
美少女戦士 セーラームーン

OCTOBER

DNA 2 COLLECTION

The complete collected *DNA 2* series, available in one box set! Join Karen, a time-travelling warrior, as she tries to stop the ultimate destruction of mankind by traveling back to stop the Mega-Playboy virus from infecting the world! (Central Park Media, DVD, $119.98)

HAIBANE RENMEI VOL.2

More and more of the strange new world Rakka inhabits is revealed, but more questions are raised. The ash-wings around her seem complacent with their existence, but what's the secret that lies behind it all? (Pioneer, DVD, $29.98)

INITIAL D VOL. 2

More fast-paced adventures with Tak and his legendary 86 Trueno! Tak struggles with his desire to race, juggling it with his unspoken feelings for a girl with a terrible secret. (TOKYOPOP, DVD, $19.99)

KIKAIDER VOL.2

Bandai's latest smash hit series continues. Jiro learns more about his past and confronts his future, with Mitsuko in tow. The two step ever closer to a forbidden, impossible love, while the forces of Professor Gil encroach on their ill-fated passion. (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

LUPIN THE THIRD TV VOL. 4

Lupin and his gang of thieves return, and this time the stakes are higher than they've ever been before! Can Zenigata outwit the master thief, or will Lupin escape to thieve another day? (Pioneer, DVD, $24.98)

MAHOROMATIC: SOMETHING MORE BEAUTIFUL VOL.2

Suguru's life becomes even more complicated as the situation with Mahoro and Minawa heats up. The two get along just fine, but Minawa and Mahoro are being targeted by something sinister. (Pioneer, DVD, $29.98)

MAO-CHAN VOL. 1

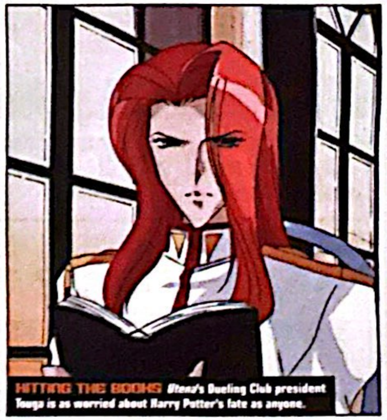
From the creator of *Love Hina.* The Chief of Defense has put together a misfit Earth Defense Team to defend against cute aliens. The most frenetic member is Mao-chan, the chief's own granddaughter! (Pioneer, DVD, $29.98)

MILLENNIUM ACTRESS

Satoshi Kon's (*Perfect Blue*) new psychodrama delves into the mind of an elderly actress being interviewed by two young reporters. But can they tell her real life from her movie career? Can *she?* (Dreamworks, DVD, $29.98)

PATLABOR: ORIGINAL SERIES VOL. 1

Although mecha are common within ten years, crimes involving them also rise, so the Patlabor police unit was developed to combat them. Staffed by eccentric and overzealous officers, they always get their man—or monster! (Central Park Media, DVD, $49.98)



HITTING THE BOOKS *Utena's* Dueling Club president Touga is as worried about Harry Potter's fate as anyone.

REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA VOL. 9

The finale of *Revolutionary Girl Utena* is nearly upon us, and with this volume, even more secrets about Ohtori Academy are revealed. Akio unveils his true nature, and Utena struggles with several difficult decisions. (Central Park Media, DVD, $29.99)

TIME STRANGER

A classic film from the 1980's comes to American DVD for the first time ever. Based on an old TV series called Goshogun, *Time Stranger* revolves around a woman who's forced to go back in time and deal with her past decisions. (Central Park Media, DVD, $19.98)

WITCH HUNTER ROBIN VOL. 1 LIMITED EDITION

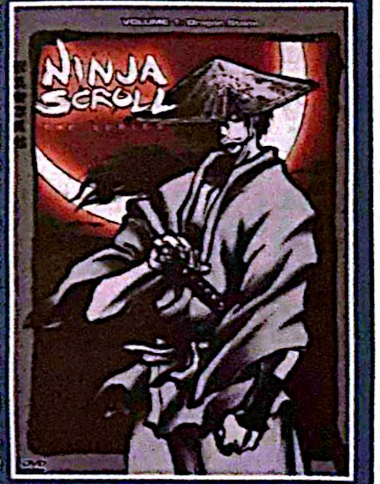
The STNJ, Japan's premier witch hunting facility, has recruited a flame-wielding Craft user named Robin Sena to assist in their inquisition. But what is her—and their—dark secret? (Bandai, DVD, $49.95) ●

HOT PICK

NINJA SCROLL TV VOL. 1

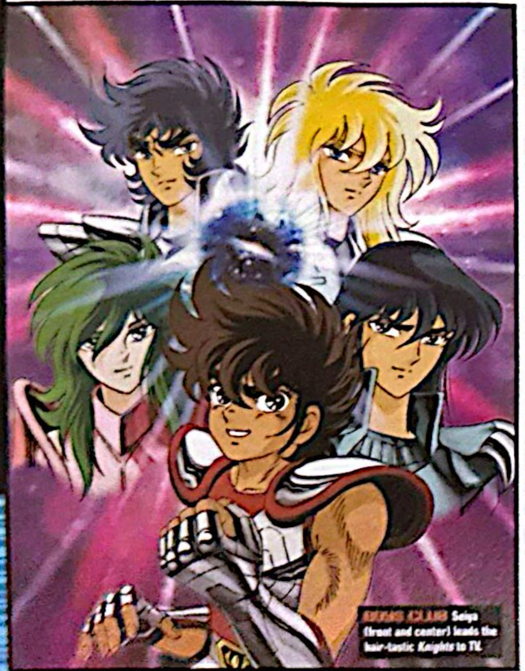
September 2nd on DVD, $29.98, Urban Vision

If you asked average people what anime they'd seen, chances are you'd get two main answers: *Akira* and *Ninja Scroll.* After the cult success of the first *Ninja Scroll* movie, it didn't take a genius to realize that more *Ninja Scroll* would be immensely popular and rake in a load of otaku cash, so here's Urban Vision with the *Ninja Scroll: TV Series.* Following the continued adventures of the legendary demon slayer Jubei, now with a sidekick in the form of a butt-kicking ninja girl named Shigure, the TV series isn't so much a sequel to the movie as simply more of the same, this time with a bit more storyline. Don't be worried, *Scroll* fans—there's still way too much over-the-top violence for this sucker to air on American TV, so devoted fans are in for treat. Meanwhile, newbies to *Ninja Scroll* can enjoy the beautiful animation, produced by Studio Madhouse, famous for mega-hits like *X/1999, Trigun,* and *Cardcaptor Sakura,* and is probably one of the highest-quality television animation series ever produced. This title is a must for most anime fans…if they're old enough. ■ ZB



SIGN OF THE TIMES

MEGA-SAGA 'SAINT SEIYA' NOW 'KNIGHTS OF THE ZODIAC' THIS FALL



BOYS CLUB Seiya (front and center) leads the hair-tastic *Knights* to TV.

Sometimes, size *does* matter.

Even the most casual anime fan is familiar with the long-running anime mega-sagas such as *Astro Boy*, *Dragon Ball Z* and *Sailor Moon*. But many haven't heard of the equally popular *Saint Seiya*, which premiered in Japan in 1986 and ran for a whopping 114 episodes. Based on a manga by Masami Kurmada that originally ran in *Shonen Jump*, *Saint Seiya* is considered one of the great anime classics and is a smash hit throughout most of Asia and South America—but it hasn't made it to the U.S. until now. Cartoon Network has acquired 40 episodes of this series, and will air it under the title *Knights of the Zodiac* during the Saturday Action Block.

"The success that *Knights of the Zodiac* has had internationally is phenomenal," says Andy Heyward, CEO and chairman of licensor DIC Entertainment. "Furthermore, there has never been a Japanese series that has been a mega-hit in Asia, Europe and South America that has failed to become a mega-hit in the U. S."

Knights of the Zodiac tells the story of the Bronze Knight Seiya, who leads the Knights of Athena in battle against Phoenix and the Knights of Aries. Seiya and his comrades must fight the most formidable warriors in the galaxy to make their way up the chain of precious metals to protect the golden armor of Sagittarius and return Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, to her rightful throne. Of course, it wouldn't be good anime without tons of martial arts action, crazy plots, and enemies who just won't stay dead.

Knights premieres August 30 at 7p.m. ■ Caitlin Moriarty

TUNE IN TOKYO

CHECK OUT THE LATEST ANIME THAT'S ONLY ON THE AIR IN JAPAN

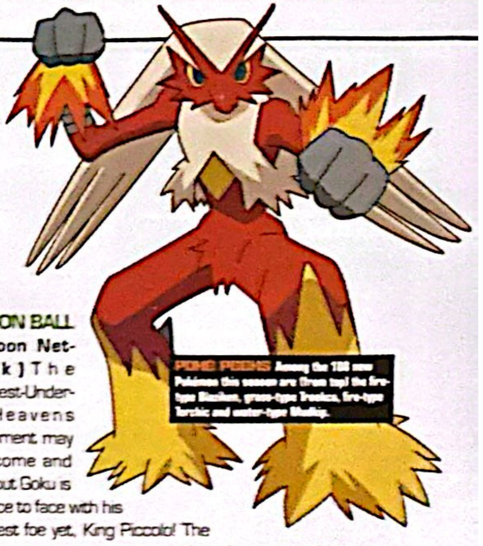
GADGUARD

From Gonzo, the studio which created *Gatekeepers* and *Hellsing*, comes a new sci-fi anime about a resource-poor future Earth, the birth of new hope, and of course, giant mecha. In Night Town, where residents live in total darkness at night due to a lack of electricity, Hajiki Sanada scrapes by working part time at Hachisuka Transportation. One day, a client makes Hajiki an offer he can't refuse—transport the mysterious element known as GAD for a generous price. Unbeknownst to Hajiki, the GAD bonds to him and responds to his thoughts, transmuting into a mecha called Lightning. Now Hajiki and Lightning must deal with his fellow mecha warriors Kanata, Aiko and Takumi, each with their own agendas. And in addition to the constant conflicts between mecha, Hajiki also has to evade powerful, shadowy figures with their own plans for the GAD technology. ■ CM

LEGENDS OF THE FALL

INSIDE THIS SEASON'S NEW SHOWS & OLD FAVORITES

Fall may be the horrific end of summer vacation, but at least the new TV season cushions the blow. This year there's something for every taste, from action-comedy to epic fantasy to hard-edged science fiction to...well, just read on! Remember, TV schedules are notoriously shifty, so don't blame us if "The Man" changes 'em!



POKÉ PEEPS Among the 100 new Pokémon this season are (from top) the fire-type Blaziken, grass-type Treecko, fire-type Torchic and water-type Mudkip.

COOL NEW SHOWS

DRAGON BALL GT (Cartoon Network) Goku's not dead for once! Hooray! He's just been turned into a kid. Ten years after the events in *DBZ*, Emperor Pilaf gathers the Black Star Dragon Balls and summons the dragon to grant his wish. When Goku tries to stop him, he's accidentally turned into a kid, and must scour the cosmos for these new Balls before the Earth explodes! Enter Baby, an evil, artificial lifeform determined to get revenge on all Saiyans, with the ability to possess anyone he comes into contact with. Can Goku straighten all this out? (Premieres Friday, September 29th, at 6 p.m.)

SHAMAN KING (Fox Box) Yoh is a Shaman who can speak to ghosts and allow them to possess his body, gaining their abilities in the process. He's on a quest to become a Shaman King, but in order to do so, he'll have to battle evil ghosts as well as another shaman or two...and especially his domineering girlfriend! (Premieres Saturday, September 6th, at 11 a.m.)

SONIC X (Fox Box) Sonic winds up on a strange new world, populated almost entirely by humans. Never one to let spatial displacement get him down, Sonic teams up with a local named Christopher to find the Chaos Emeralds, stones of immense power. Of course, Sonic's nemesis, Dr. Eggman, is after the Chaos Emeralds as well, because they'll give him the power to conquer the world. (Premieres Saturday, September 6th, at 9:30 a.m.)

SUPERIOR DEFENDER (Cartoon Network) *Superior Defender* is the funniest Gundam series ever, starring vertically-challenged mecha from three different worlds. The Mobile, Knight and Musha Defenders must join forces to fight the evil Dark Axis, an implacable foe that luckily is just as pint-sized as they are. (Premieres Monday, September 1st, at 5 p.m.)

RETURNING FAVES

BEYBLADE (ABC Family) Tyson and his team of Beybladers won the World Championship last season, and went their separate ways. When new villains attack them individually to capture their Bit Beasts, the team must reunite to defend themselves and discover the secret of the new Cyber Bit Beasts! (Currently airs weekdays 7 a.m., Saturday & Sunday 7 & 9 a.m.)

DRAGON BALL (Cartoon Network) The Strongest-Under-the-Heavens Tournament may have come and gone, but Goku is now face to face with his strongest foe yet, King Piccolo! The green monster seems unstoppable as he protects his golden orb, but if anyone can beat him, Goku can! (New episodes start Monday, September 1st., at 6 p.m.)

INU-YASHA (Cartoon Network) Kagome and Inu-Yasha continue to search for Sacred Jewel shards in feudal Japan. Sesshomaru's hot on their trail, learning new attacks like the "Cutting Wind" and searching for a weapon even more powerful than the Tetsusaiga! Naraku embeds a Sacred Jewel shard into Kikyo's dead soul, and Inu-Yasha battles a wolf demon that slaughtered an entire village! (New episodes start Monday, August 25th, at 12 a.m.)

POKÉMON (Kids WB!) Ash and his pals get zapped to a different dimension and he'll need all of his Pokemons' power to escape. Luckily, there will be 100 new Pokémon for Ash to catch, train and put the hurt on Team Rocket with. (New episodes start Saturday, September 13th at 10 a.m.)

ULTIMATE MUSCLE (Fox Box) The show continues where it left off—with the Muscle League ready to take on the Poison Six Pack, now in the most important wrestling tournament in the universe: the Chojin Crown. Twelve finalists, including Kid Muscle, tussle for it and their honor...which puts Kid Muscle at a disadvantage already. (New episodes premiere Saturday, September 6th)

YU-GI-OH! (Kids WB) In the third season, the Battle City Finals continue! Yugi fights with his Duel Monsters deck for the fate of the world, the evil Marik tries to steal all the Millennium Items and Seto Kaiba wants all the Egyptian God Cards! (New episodes start Saturday, September 13th at 8:30 & 11 a.m.) ■ CM

ON THE AIR

WHAT TO WATCH WHERE

TOKYO PIG

ABC FAMILY

***Beyblade*:** Weekdays 7:30 a.m.; Sat. & Sun. 7:30 & 9 a.m.
***Medabots*:** Weekdays 7 a.m.; Sat. & Sun. 7 & 9:30 a.m.
***Tokyo Pig*:** Sat. & Sun. 11 a.m.

CARTOON NETWORK

Toonami: Weekdays Mon.-Thu., *Superior Defender* at 5 p.m., *Dragon Ball Z* at 5:30, *Dragon Ball* 6 p.m, and *Cyborg 009* at 6:30. On Fridays, they'll be showing new *DBZ* movies at 5 p.m., *Dragon Ball GT* at 6 p.m., and *Cyborg 009* at 6:30 again.

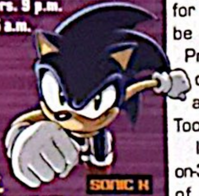
Adult Swim Weeknights: *Inu-Yasha* at 12 a.m., *Blue Gender* at 12:30, *Kikaider* at 1, *Trigun* at 1:30, from Mon.-Thu.

CYBORG 009

Adult Swim Sunday: *The Big O* at 11 p.m., *Kikaider* at 1 a.m., *Trigun* at 1:30

Saturday: *Knights of the Zodiac* at 7 p.m., *Rurouni Kenshin* at 9:30 p.m., *Pokémon* at 11, *.hack//SIGN* at midnight, and another *DBZ* at 12:30.

***Hamtaro*:** Weekdays 7 a.m., Sat. 1 p.m.
***Pokémon*:** Mon-Thurs. 9 p.m.
***Zoids*:** Mon.-Fri. at 6 a.m.


SONIC X

FOX BOX

***Kirby: Right Back At Ya!*:** Sat. 10 a.m.
***Sonic X*:** Sat. 9:30 a.m.
***Shaman King*:** Sat. 11 a.m.
***Ultimate Muscle*:** Sat. 9 a.m.

INTERNATIONAL CHANNEL

FUSHIGI YUUGI

***Dragon Ball GT*:** Sat. 10:30 p.m.
***El Hazard*:** Wed. 11 p.m.
***Fushigi Yuugi*:** Tues. 11 p.m.
***Lost Universe*:** Mon. 11 p.m.
***Slayers*:** Fri. 11 p.m., Sat. 11 p.m.

KIDS WB!

***Megaman: NT Warrior*:** Sat. 9:30 a.m.
***Pokémon*:** Weekdays 4 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m.
***Yu-Gi-Oh!*:** Weekdays 4:30 p.m., Sat. 8:30 & 11 a.m.

TECHTV

BOOGIEPOP PHANTOM

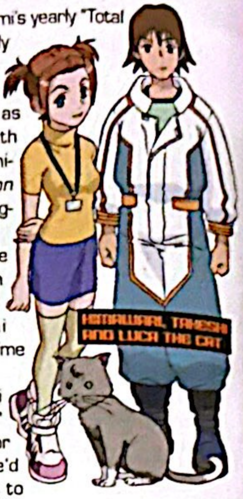
TechTV's Anime Unleashed adds *Boogiepop Phantom* to its offerings. Anime Unleashed airs 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, weeknights 1 to 1:30 a.m., and Friday 11 p.m. to 1 a.m. Other offerings include *Silent Mobius*, *Dual*, *Betterman*, *Crest of the Stars* and *Serial Experiments Lain*. Check TechTV.com for the most recent listings.

OTHERS

- Anime Network: http://www.theanimenetwork.com. The Anime Network's Video-On-Demand format means you get the shows you want, when you want them.
- Action Movie Channel: http://www.actionmoviechannel.com
- Showtime Beyond: http://www.sho.com/beyond ■ CM

5-MINUTE ANIME?

PRODUCTION I.G. AND TOONAMI CREATE 'IGPX'

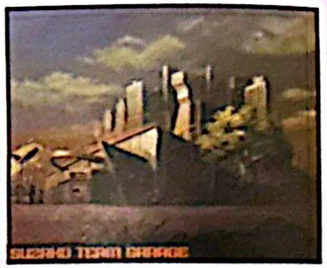

HIMAWARI, TAKESHI AND LUCA THE CAT

Most folks know about Toonami's yearly "Total Immersion Events"—usually a weeklong, CG-adventure starring the robot Tom and his ship. This year, Tom takes the sideline as Cartoon Network teams up with anime studio Production I.G. (animators of *Blood*, the *Evangelion* movies and *FLCL*)—to make an original anime called *IGPX*.

IGPX will consist of five 5-minute shorts which will begin airing on September 15th, and were written and directed by Koichi Mashimo, who also helmed the anime hits *.hack//SIGN* and *Noir*.

"*IGPX* is a big win for Toonami fans and for Cartoon Network," says Sean Akins, creative director for Toonami. "I didn't know if we'd be able to do it, but we went to Production I.G. first because they're the best." Because of the quick timeframe, Akins selected one of I.G.'s already in-progress projects, which was adapted for the Toonami event.

In the year 2040, the world's largest sporting event is a 3-on-3 mecha-fighting battle. The Suzuka ("Phoenix") team consists of amateur pilots Takashi, Liz, Amy and medic Himawari, who win a wild card ticket into the pro IGPX tournament.

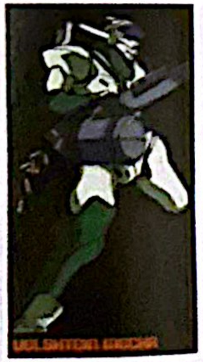

SUZAKU TEAM GARAGE

IGPX is a bold new step for Cartoon Network, as it marks their first totally original—and exclusive—anime. "It's totally gonna blow away anything we've done before. It's a dream come true for me," says Akins.

"It was a wonderful experience to work with Cartoon Network and Sean," says Production I.G.'s international operations manager Maki Terashima-Furuta. "I hope this is a beginning of a beautiful relationship between Production I.G. and CN."

These aren't empty words; at the recent Anime Expo, Terashima-Furuta said that if *IGPX* was popular enough, it could become a regular series.

■ Robert Bricken


VELSHTEIN MECHA

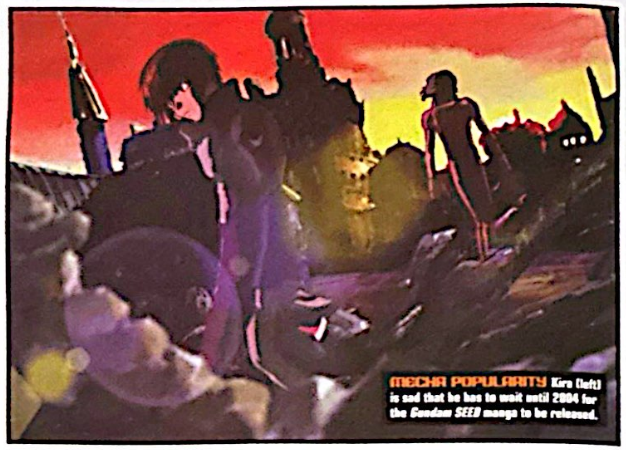
IF IT'S HOT, YOU'LL FIND IT HERE.
ToyWiz.com
POWERS
Marine Force Recon
DIGIMON
TOYWIZ.COM TOYWIZ.COM TOYWIZ.COM TOYWIZ.COM TOYWIZ.COM TOYWIZ.CO
DRAGON BALL Z
Pokémon
DIGIMON
ty
MAGIC The Gathering

MANGA AT RANDOM

LEADING AMERICAN PUBLISHER SETS ITS SIGHTS ON THE MANGA MARKET

The corporate giants of America want anime—big-time movie distributors Columbia and Dreamworks have already both dipped their feet into Nippon's pool. But manga has been ignored—till now. Random House, one of the largest publishers in North America is getting into the manga game!

Random House has announced their own manga line through their Del Rey imprint (famous for its science fiction and fantasy books), and they're starting with some big guns: Masatsugu Iwase's *Gundam SEED* and *Love Hina* creator Ken Akamatsu's latest series *Negima*, about a young-looking wizard sent to teach at an all-girls school in Japan. These announcements came off of a whirlwind of speculation ever since January's announcement of the partnership between Random House and Kodansha—not coincidentally one of Japan's leading publishers and home of the *Akira* and *Sailor Moon* manga, among others.


MECHA POPULARITY Kira (left) is sad that he has to wait until 2004 for the *Gundam SEED* manga to be released.

Del Rey's director of manga Dallas Middaugh explained that the idea for the new line came out of the plans for a different product. "Del Rey had considered doing a line of graphic novels adapted from some of their science fiction titles," he elaborated. "Unfortunately, that turned out to be too costly, but it meant that when the Kodansha opportunity came along Del Rey had already done the research and was very interested."

Their titles will conform to the current industry standard, known in publishing circles as "the manga format," reading right-to-left, digest-sized, with about 200 pages per book. The first books will be out in Spring 2004; Del Rey plans to announce more titles in 2003. "Our plan right now is to focus very intently on making the launch successful, because it is from that success that we will be able to build our program," Middaugh confirmed.

But with Random House' enormous publishing power, you can expect more from Del Rey manga than any other publisher. "Having access to the Random House publicity department has been amazing so far," confided Middaugh. "You'll see some new and exciting initiatives in the coming months." ■ Trisha L. Sebastian

QUICK READS

PAGE TURNIN' NEWS CLIPS

'POP ON TOP

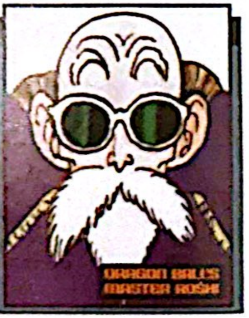
TOKYOPOP announced they acquired the license to nine new titles at the San Diego Comic Con, including *Ai Yori Aoshi*, *Macross 7*, *A.I. Love You*, *Trash* and *Saiyuki*. The inclusion of these manga brings their total to over 90 titles, cementing their status as the largest manga publisher in the United States.

IC SHOUJO!

Recognizing the importance of female manga fans, IC Entertainment expanded their White Rose girls' comics (a. k. a. shôjo comics) to include *A. I. Revolution* and *Angel Manual*, starting in November. This brings the total number of shôjo comics published in the U. S. to around 75—under 25% of the entire market share.

NO BALLS ABOUT IT

Goku, Bulma and the gang are in serious trouble in Finland. Finland House of Representatives member Susanna Rohkonen said that the *Dragon Ball* manga encourages pedophilic behavior because of Master Roshi's tendencies to ogle the teenaged Bulma. As a result, Finnish retailer Rautakirja has decided to stop selling copies of the manga to kids under 12. ■ JC

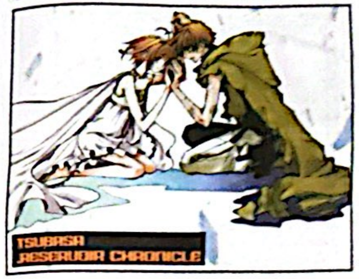

DRAGON BALLS MASTER ROSHI

SAKURA GROWS UP

NEW CLAMP TITLE FEATURES FAMILIAR CHARACTERS

Although the last TOKYOPOP *Cardcaptor Sakura* volume came out in August, that doesn't mean Sakura, Li Shaoran, and the gang's adventures are done. CLAMP has just begun a whole new retelling of the *Cardcaptor* story in Japan called *Tsubasa RESERVoir CHRoNiCLE* (and yes, that's exactly how it's spelled).

The series started in the *Weekly Shonen Magazine* over the summer, and features older and different versions of many recognizable CLAMP staple characters including the *Cardcaptor Sakura* gang as well as Chi from *Chobits* and Mokona of *Magic Knight Rayearth*.


TSUBASA RESERVOIR CHRONICLE

In this story, the teenaged Shaoran is an archeologist studying ancient texts and items, while Princess Sakura suffers from foreboding visions that be her not just to Shaoran, but also to a force trying to invade her realm and destroy all the royal family. ■ JC

'FULL METAL' MANGA

ADV INTRODUCES NEW MANGA LINE

First they distributed anime, then they got their own TV channel, and then they turned to film production...what else is left for ADV to do—conquer the world? Or just get into manga publishing?

ADV is choosing the latter with ADV Manga, and a preliminary lineup of 19 manga series and art books, published in the industry-standard style. Their first release is the first volume of *Full Metal Panic*, on September 9, with their second book being *Azumanga Daioh*, coming out on September 16.

The odds of them releasing manga tie-ins to their existing properties is pretty high. ADV spokesperson Andrew Nelson hinted, "When our strongest, most compelling anime titles are associated with quality manga, we're interested in publishing them." ■ Trisha L. Sebastian

AZUMANGA DAIOH

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

YU YU HAKUSHO: THE MANGA VS THE ANIME

Tough teen Yusuke's bad to the bone, but he saves a child at the cost of his own life. The Spirit Realm offers to return Yusuke to life...with the catch that he's now a Spirit Detective, forced to keep demons from invading the Living Realm. But as usual, there are wee differences between Viz's manga and FUNimation's anime.

BACK FROM THE DEAD

Yusuke is resurrected in the anime a lot quicker than in the manga. He's got his body back by episode five of the anime series, but doesn't return to life in the manga until the second year. In that time, he has a whole series of adventures helping living beings and spirits as a spirit himself.

ORIGINS OF A SAYAKA

In the manga, Sayaka was a friendless girl ghost who played with Shuuta in her dreams. In the anime, Sayaka is an agent sent from Koenma to check and keep tabs on how Yusuke's doing with his various quests.

SHONEN JUMP
06
YUSUKE

EGG ON HIS FACE

In the anime to save his lady friend Keiko, who's trapped in a fire, Yusuke breaks his sacred golden egg, an item that was his key to resurrection. In the manga, Koenma uses his "divine powers" to help Yusuke rescue Keiko.

BAD HABITS

In the manga Yusuke smokes...*a lot*. The anime replaced that bad habit with chewing gum.

TITANIC TEAM UP

In the anime it is never revealed how Hiei and Kurama first met. In the manga the two team up by accident to fight a villain called Eight Arms. When they see how well their styles mesh, they decide to form a partnership.

DEATH AIN'T PRETTY

Much of the manga's gruesome death scenes were left out of the anime. All the Dark Tournament battles were filled with disembowelments, blood and gore. Those scenes in the anime avoided being so graphic, but kept all the deaths. ■ JC

HIEI AND KURAMA

COMING COMICS

MANGA TO WATCH FOR THIS FALL!

SEPTEMBER

ALIEN NINE BOOK 3

Life goes on and innocence gets lost for the unlucky girls of the Alien Party. Hitoshi Tomizawa (CPM Manga, $15.95)

ASTRO BOY VOL. 19

The Blue Knight threatens to ignite an all-out conflict between man and machine...and cause the destruction of Astro Boy! Osamu Tezuka (Dark Horse, $9.95)

BABY BIRTH VOL. 1

Hizuru Yobozuki and Takuya Hijo are descendents of demon fighters, who must vanquish monsters let loose when an ancient seal is broken. Sukehiro Tomita & Haruhiko Mikimoto (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL #82

Anotsu and Rin are up against mysterious assassins, crazy quests, and more, as some nagging questions are answered and origins are revealed. Hiroaki Samura (Dark Horse, $2.99)

BOYS OVER FLOWERS VOL. 2

When Rui's ex-girlfriend returns from France, can Tsukushi hope to compete? Yoko Kamio (Viz, $9.95)

CANNON GOD EXAXXION #17

Akane was shot by the Riofaldian doctor and lays ill. Can Hoichi help Akane before it's too late? Kenichi Sonoda (Dark Horse, $2.99)

DUKLYON: CLAMP SCHOOL DEFENDERS VOL. 1

When a horrible evil invades the Clamp School, detectives Kentarou and Takeshi are on the case to discover the villains. CLAMP (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

FLCL VOL. 1

When a girl claiming to be an alien hits Naota in the head with a bass guitar, a robot sprouts from his head. Then it gets *really* weird. (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

NEXT WORLD VOL. 1

When Fumoon discovers a gas cloud that could destroy the earth, he vows to save all life by transporting it to another planet. Osamu Tezuka (Dark Horse, $13.95)

LABYRINTH CIRCUS VOL. 1

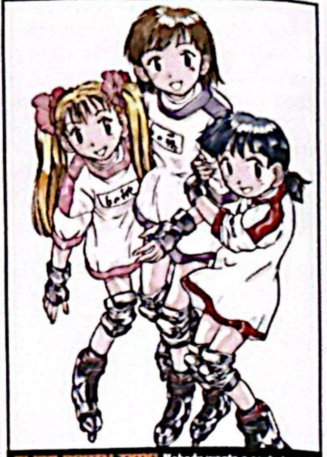
The Labyrinth Circus makes dreams come true, but sometimes they turn to nightmares! Senno Knife (IC Entertainment, $12.95)

LOVE HINA VOL. 14

The conclusion! Will Keitaro's grandmother's return end all his romantic notions and ideas? Ken Akamatsu (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

MARS VOL. 14

Kira's happiness is short-lived, because she discovers that Masao was just released from the psych ward. Fuyumi Soryo (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)



ALIEN PARTY TIME Nobody wants a party to end, but the *Alien 9* girls have to catch aliens in her party.

MY SASSY GIRL VOL.1

Two college students who have nothing in common find themselves drawn together in this romantic comedy. Ho Sik Kim & Dae Hong Min (ComicsOne.com, $13.95)

RECORD OF LODOSS WAR: CHRONICLES OF THE HEROIC KNIGHT BOOK SIX

Lodoss is at stake when Spark and his crew go up against Vagnado and the Goddess of Destruction. Ryo Mizuno & Masato Natsumoto CPM Manga, $15.95)

VISION OF ESCAFLOWNE VOL. 2

Hitomi's getting used to living in Gaea while native Van is getting jeers from his peers, because he hasn't been able to totally protect the realm from evil. Aki Katsu (TOKYOPOP, $9.95)

YOU & ME VOL. 8

Yuu's got two suitors to choose between and is also stuck in the middle of a gang war. Hiroshi Aro (IC Entertainment, $11.95)

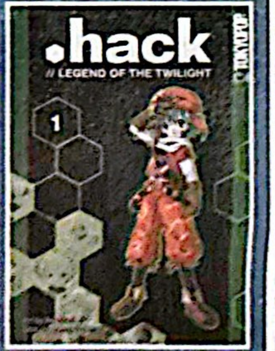
YU YU HAKUSHO VOL. 2

Yusuke's a ghost dealing with other ghosts, keeping his mortal body safe, and protecting his friends, all in the hopes of being resurrected soon. Yoshihiro Togashi (Viz, $7.95)

HOT PICK

.HACK//LEGEND OF THE TWILIGHT VOL. 1

by Tatsuya Hamazaki and Rei Izumi, (September 9th, TOKYOPOP, $9.99)



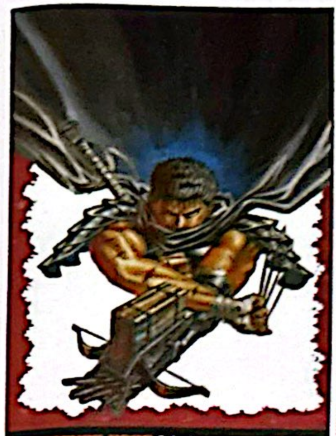
WHAT IT'S ABOUT Just because their parents separated doesn't mean twins Rena and Shugo can't hang out together. The two join an online RPG called The World and are anxious for adventure, fun, and anything else that might happen! However, when Shugo's character dies, the teen finds himself transported to a secret level, where a mysterious being called Aura entrusts him with the "Twilight Bracelet." Now Shugo must learn what the bracelet does, help protect his sister from dangers of the game—and just maybe—save The World.

WHY IT'S COOL Because it combines elements from video games, role-playing games, and real life all in one place! Plus, it's yet another part of the huge *.hack* saga, which includes the four-part videogame series, their accompanying anime OVAs, and the TV show *.hack//SIGN* (which aired on Cartoon Network). If you want to figure out everything about The World, you'll have to read this manga. Trust us: it's worth it. Reading about a videogame has never been so fun. ■ JC

OCTOBER

ALICE 19TH VOL. 1

High school student Alice Seno is granted magical powers by a rabbit and accidentally sends her sister into a dark world. Can Alice rescue her sister and control her powers? Yu Watase (Viz, $9.95)



BERSERKER RAGE Only the mature can handle the extreme action *Berserk*'s Guts is ready to bring.

BERSERK VOL. 1

Guts wanders the countryside with his gigantic sword, seeking out his destiny. Extreme violence. Kentaro Mirua (Dark Horse, $13.95)

THE BIG O VOL. 4

Roger Smith starts to regain pieces of his memory while arch-nemesis Schwarzwald turns the heat on Paradigm City. Hajime Yadate & Hitoshi Ariga. (Viz, $9.95)

BUDDHA VOL. 1

Journey through history and examine the life and formation of the man who would become Buddha. Osamu Tezuka (Vertical, Inc. $24.95)

CARDCAPTOR SAKURA: BOXED SET

Sakura has been charged with the recapture of the magical Clow cards. First of two. CLAMP (TOKYOPOP, $29.99)

CHOBITS VOL. 8: SPECIAL EDITION

The final volume can be purchased alone, but you can also get it with a collector's box for all volumes plus a special edition figurine of Chi! CLAMP (TOKYOPOP, $19.99)

COWBOY BEBOP: BOXED SET

Join Spike, Faye and Jet Black on their manga adventures. Collects both series. Yutaka Nanten and Hajime Yatate (TOKYOPOP, $39.99)

GRAVITATION VOL. 2

Shuichi's band, Bad Luck, seems to be on the road to stardom, but several potholes lie in their path. Can they get it together? Maki Murakami (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

OH MY GODDESS! TRAVELER

Belldandy's lost her powers and may lose more when she and Keiichi become trapped in a room created by Skuld. Kosuke Fujishima (Dark Horse, $17.95)

PLANETES VOL. 1

To raise the money for his own spaceship, Hachimaki joins the crew of the first manned mission to Jupiter, along with others with their own agendas. Makoto Yukimura (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

PLEASE SAVE MY EARTH VOL. 1

Alice Sakaguchi keeps dreaming that she's an alien researcher from the moon—as do six other people. As their dreams intertwine, Alice starts to realize the world she knew may not be real. Saki Hiwatari (Viz, $9.95)

POPCORN ROMANCE

Two exhausted rockers go to grandpa's farm to relax but the farm's in danger. Can the brothers help? Tomoko Taniguchi (CPM Manga, $9.99)

THE RING VOL. 1

The manga that inspired a Japanese film, an American film, and more. Based on the horror novel from Koji Suzuki. Hiroshi Takahashi & Misao Inagaki (Dark Horse, $14.95)

SHONEN JUMP #12

Eclectic manga anthology series featuring *Dragon Ball Z, Naruto, Sand Land, Shaman King, Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Yu Yu Hakusho*. Various. (Viz, $4.95)

SLAYERS SPECIAL: SPELLBOUND

Naga the Serpent is missing...but does Lina Inverse even care? Wacky hijinks are sure to follow! Hajime Kanzaka, Yoshihiro Kamada & Tommy Ohtsuka (CPM Manga, $15.95)

TOKYO MEW MEW VOL. 4

Ichigo finally transforms into a cat, and finds a way to be near her crush Aoyama. She loves spending time with him, but will she ever be able to transform back? Mia Ikumi & Reiko Yoshida (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

TRIGUN VOL. 1

Why does nice guy Vash have everyone in the universe wanting him dead? Yasuhiro Nightow (Viz, $4.95)

ULTRAMAN TIGA #3

Ultraman Tiga goes up against extra-terrestrial foes with dreams of conquering earth. Tony Wong, Khoo Fuk Lung, UDON (Dark Horse, $2.99) ●

GETTING TO KNOW

TOSHIMITSU SHIMIZU

801 TTS AIRBATS

NAME Toshimitsu Shimizu
MAJOR WORKS *801 TTS Airbats, Rei Rei, Red Prowling Devil, Maico 2010*
CURRENT PROJECT *My Otako-San*
WEBSITE www.kt.rim.or.jp/~reirei

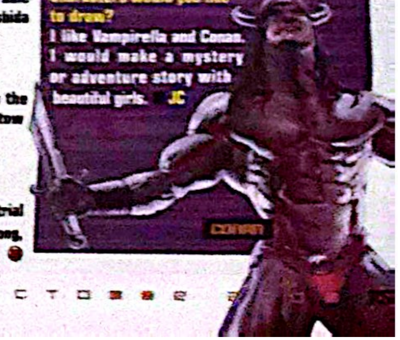
Toshimitsu Shimizu is an accomplished manga-ka with several series under his belt. Currently, his *Red Prowling Devil* is being released by ComicsOne. AI caught up with Shimizu to talk life, hobbies and pretty girls.

What inspires your manga?
My ideas come from my own imagination. I'm more satisfied with coming up with my own ideas rather than borrowing concepts from other places.

What's the toughest part of the human anatomy for you to draw?
In many cases, if I had trouble drawing the back or the muscles in the back or another body part, I would turn to books on human anatomy, or book on poses, and sometimes, I would use computer software to reproduce poses.

If you weren't making manga, what do you think your career would be?
I would love to be a scriptwriter for dramas. But I don't think I'm qualified.

If you were able which American comic characters would you like to draw?
I like Vampirella and Conan. I would make a mystery or adventure story with beautiful girls. ■ JC

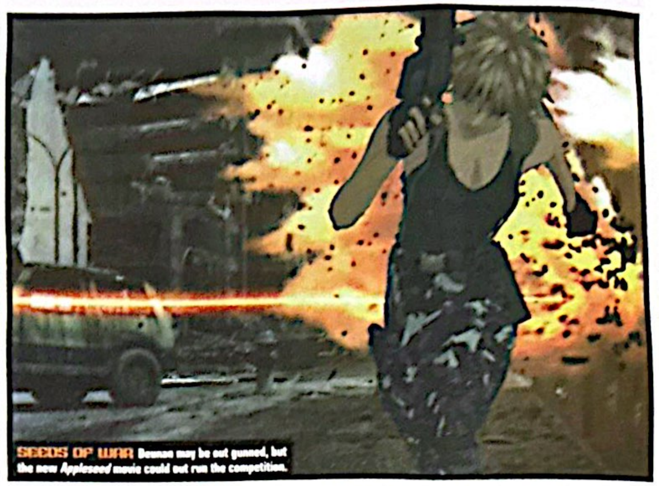


CONAN

THEATRICAL

'APPLESEED' BEARS NEW FRUIT

CLASSIC SHIROW TALE GETS NEW 3D FEEL


SEEDS OF WAR Deunan may be out gunned, but the new *Appleseed* movie could out run the competition.

For those of you who can't get enough of Masamune Shirow's work, 2004 should be a banner year. *Appleseed*, one of Shirow's best-known titles, will be getting the movie treatment—in 3D.

"When we were considering what content would be the most interesting to launch overseas, we immediately thought of Shirow because his comics are held in such high esteem both inside and outside of Japan," explains president Sumiji Miyake of production company Micott & Basara, Inc. "We decided *Appleseed* was a comic that could really benefit and be brought to life using the latest technology that combines the best elements of both CGI and 2D anime."

The *Appleseed* story is thus: in the post-WWIII utopia called Olympus, genetically engineered cyborgs called Biodroids monitor an uneasy human population. Deunan, a member of the human police force, gets caught in the middle of the two opposing forces.

Fans of the original manga will be delighted to hear that Shirow is very much involved with the current version of *Appleseed*. "We are consulting with Shirow and have his input into every element of the film, from script to character design and development," states Miyake. "I think its fair to say that Shirow's involvement in *Appleseed* is greater than with *Ghost in the Shell*."

Tentatively scheduled for a Spring 2004 release in Japan, *Appleseed*'s American release is pending, but Miyake says theatrical distribution for the film is a must. "This will be the world's first full 3D CG Japanese anime movie, and we want it to be seen by as many people as possible," he declares.

Appleseed is being directed by Shinji Aramaki (*Bubblegum Crisis*) and the creative producer is Fumihiko Sori (*Titanic*). While still in production, the movie's budget should max out at $6.5 million. Be sure to check the next issue of *Anime Insider* where we'll be offering a sneak peek at the new movie! ■ Bryan Reesman

THE BUZZ

HAVE YOU HEARD THE LATEST?

LOSING STEAM? Those who have been eagerly anticipating *Steamboy*, Katsuhiro Otomo's directorial follow-up to the famed *Akira*, will have to wait a little longer. Originally scheduled for a simultaneous theatrical release in Japan and America this October, the film has been pushed back to sometime in 2004 as the complicated climax sequence is taking longer to film than anticipated.

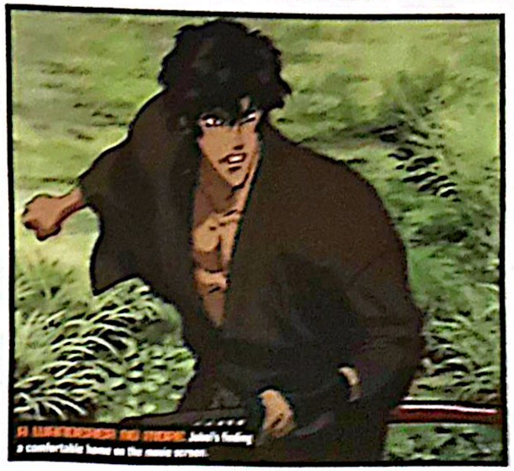
NO LONGER IN FLUX Paramount's live action rendition of Peter Chung's MTV cult hit *Aeon Flux* is shooting mainly in Brasilia, the capital city of Brazil. The location was chosen because many of the city's buildings feature futuristic designs from the 1960s by architects Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, which should complement Chung's original abstract landscapes.

EVA TIDBITS An ADV representative revealed over the summer convention season that the live-action version of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* will not be a prequel or a sequel, but a retelling of the original epic story. The film will feature an international cast with a budget a budget closing in on $100 million, and will be partially filmed in New Zealand, home of FX house Weta! ■ BR

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION

'NINJA' FEVER

SAMURAI SEQUEL TO SLICE UP THE SILVER SCREEN


A WANDERER NO MORE Jubei's finding a comfortable home on the movie screen.

Mercenary samurai Jubei Kibagami may have traveled across Japan, but his wandering days are far from over. The star of *Ninja Scroll* will take up his hat and sword again for a long-awaited animated sequel treatment in mid-2005.

This proclamation came hot on the heels of the announcement of a live-action feature scheduled for 2004 and the release date for the DVDs of the TV series, which are coming out here in the States beginning this September— before they're being released in Japan.

According to an Urban Vision representative, the story for the animated *Ninja Scroll* sequel has been completed, and creator Yoshiaki Kawajiri is finishing up the storyboards. The story will be a direct sequel to the first movie, and will contain elements from the TV series.

As far as the live-action film is concerned, a representative from Threshold Entertainment stated that the movie would be a $60 million production loaded with effects, and they plan to license the property into many other formats, including television, video games, and music.

Ninja Scroll joins an ever-growing list of mature-themed anime properties that will be receiving live action treatments, including *Akira* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. ■ BR

COMING SOON?

While the Pokémon television series is still airing on Cartoon Network and Kids' WB!, its silver screen fortunes have been dwindling. The fifth installment—*Pokémon Heroes*—grossed a paltry $800,000 earlier this year. Conversely, the same film racked up over $20 million in Japan, where the brand is much healthier.

What kind of life is in store for the sixth film? The movie—known as *Pocket Monsters: Advance Generation* or *Jirachi—the Seven Night Wish Star*—hit Japanese screens on July 19th (Japanese films open on Saturdays), grossing over $3.7 million in its first weekend. Thanks to an advance ticket purchase program attached to sales of the Game Boy Advance data card for Jirachi, sales were actually at over one million tickets. The film revolves around Jirachi, a new Pokémon who awakes only every 1,000 years with the power to grant wishes. A magician named Butler wants to use that power for evil, while four other Pokémon made their debut as well.

After such a respectable Japanese opening, the American licenser 4Kids Entertainment isn't yet saying if the film will be released in America, but it seems likely that Pikachu will be gracing the silver screen for a little while longer. ■ BR

I WANT MY OWN TRAILER...
...AND MEOWTH'S HEAD ON A STICK!
PIKACHU

JAPAN BOX OFFICE

STUDIO GHIBLI IS MORE THAN JUST HAYAO MIYAZAKI

While many anime fans associate Studio Ghibli with the films directed by Hayao Miyazaki (*Spirited Away*, *Princess Mononoke*), the nearly two-decade old company has also produced noteworthy movies by other directors, including Isao Takahata, whose *Grave Of The Fireflies* was hailed by film critic Roger Ebert as the one of the greatest anti-war movies ever made. Unfortunately, most of these acclaimed films are not available in America. ■ BR

GHIBLI'S TOP-GROSSING NON-MIYAZAKI RELEASES

FILM	DIRECTOR	GENRE	LENGTH	[illegible]	GROSS
The Cat Returns (2002)	Hiroyuki Morita	Comedy/Fantasy	75 min.	Exec. Producer	[illegible]
Pom Poko (1994)	Isao Takahata	Comedy/Fantasy/ adventure	119 min.	Exec. Producer	[illegible]
Only Yesterday (1991)	Isao Takahata	Drama	118 min.	Exec. Producer	[illegible]
Whisper Of The Heart (1995)	Yoshifumi Kondo	[illegible]	111 min.	Producer	[illegible]
My Neighbors The Yamadas (1999)	Isao Takahata	Family	104 min.	no involvement	[illegible]
Grave Of The Fireflies (1988)	Isao Takahata	Historical drama/war	88 min.	no involvement	[illegible]

[illegible]

WHIP IT REAL GOOD

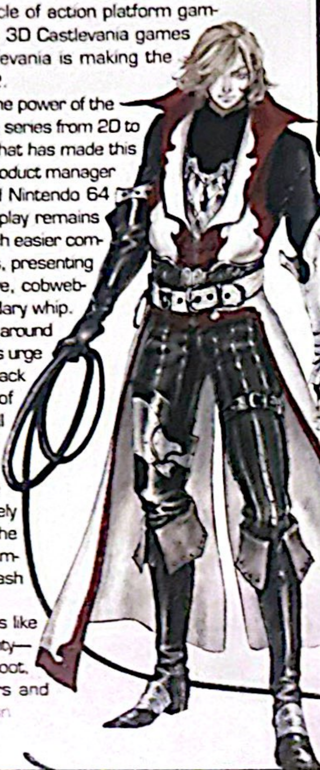
'CASTLEVANIA' NOW 3D FOR PS2

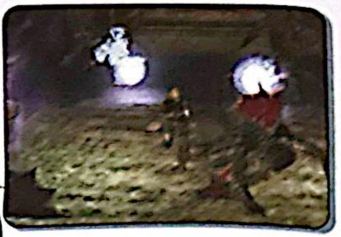
First created in 1986, Castlevania has been one of the most beloved franchises in videogame history—or, at least, the 2D ones were. While the originals were held as the pinnacle of action platform gaming, fans recoiled from the Nintendo 64 3D Castlevania games like Dracula from garlic. But now Castlevania is making the strike to 3D again...on the PlayStation 2.

"In *Castlevania: Lament of Innocence*, the power of the PS2 has enabled us to accurately take the series from 2D to 3D without losing all of the elements of what has made this series so great," promised Jason Enos, product manager at Konami of America. Unlike the ill-fated Nintendo 64 releases, the essential Castlevania gameplay remains intact even in three dimensions, with a much easier combat system and reasonable camera angles, presenting players with blood-thirsty baddies, massive, cobweb-ridden castles, and of course, that legendary whip.

Gripping the trademark weapon this time around is Leon Belmont, the progenitor of his family's urge to slay the undead. Taking it all the way back to the beginning, the engrossing fable of *Lament* is set in the 11th century, a full 500 years earlier than any of the other games. Sara, Leon's corset-clad fiancée, is kidnapped by an ominous beast so like any good knight he chases after the lovely damsel in distress. Somewhere along the way, Dracula emerges to become the vampire kingpin, thus beginning his eternal clash with the Belmont clan.

With a focus on the familiar—enemies like Medusa and items like holy water are aplenty—and an innovative, 3D combat system to boot, *Lament* should please both newcomers and the hardcore set alike. ■ Jon M. Gibson





1 Hit!
Total 17 Damage

CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

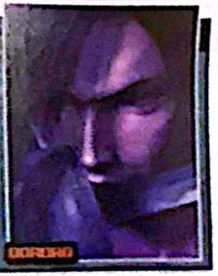
BITS OF BYTES

THE LATEST WORD ON GAMING

WOO-ING GAMERS World renowned Hong Kong action director John Woo recently opened the doors to his own development studio, Tiger Hill Entertainment, in the U.S. With three action-adventures in the works—*Hunter*, *Burglar* and *Stranglehold*—expect to see the first game released in late 2004.

EXPANDING THE FANTASY Square Enix is proving their dedication to online play by releasing the first expansion disc for *Final Fantasy XI: Rise of Zilart*. With it, players will gain access to Tu-ria, a region designed only for high-level players—complete with new monsters, Chocobo rental stations, and more. A stateside release seems destined.

PIECES OF TEZUKA Sega announced that it's developing a game based on Osamu Tezuka's classic manga *Dororo*. Set for an early 2004 release, the 3D, nearly photorealistic incarnation of the 1967 manga chronicles the quest of a young samurai searching for the 1,000 body parts that taken from him and replaced with weapons. ■ JG



DORORO

ALL THAI'D UP

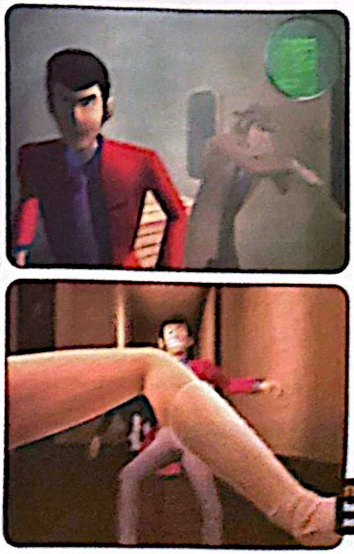
LUPIN THE 3RD PLANS HEIST IN THAILAND WITH BANDAI

Trying to steal priceless museum artifacts will land you in jail—unless you're master thief Lupin the 3rd, that is. Of course, you can be Lupin in the upcoming PlayStation 2 3-D action-adventure, *Lupin the 3rd: Magic in Thailand*, due this November from Bandai.

"The game stays close to the original ambience of the anime with flirtatious encounters between Lupin and Fujiko and a similar, cheeky humor," explained Bandai's Rika Maruya, who's leading the localization efforts for the interactive romp. "As in the show, you'll be able to choose from disguises and utilize Lupin's cohorts Jigen and Goemon to help you lift the loot while avoiding the always-persistent Zenigata, as well as other enemies."

Fans will certainly recognize Lupin's penchant for trickery, whether he's camouflaged as a museum guard, pretending he's a statue, or attempting to fast-talk his way to the 10 million gold coins hidden somewhere in the European town of Goldengasse. But disguises are only a part of the action; you'll also be handling a variety of firearms, hacking into security systems, and collecting clues on the road to riches. While wandering through all the castles, cathedrals and cobbled streets, players will also be prompted to control Jigen and Goemon at secondary junctures in the game. Even Fujiko gets her fair share of screen time in a handful of mini-games.

Topped off with a large helping of slick, 3D cut-scenes, it's a heist worth doing the jail time for. Buy the game—just don't steal it. ■ JG



IT'S A STEAL: *Magic in Thailand* has you outwitting Zenigata (above) and being outwitted by Fujiko (below).

TO IMPORT OR NOT TO IMPORT?

BRING IT!

SUNRISE WORLD WAR (PS2)

BATTLEFIELD: ANIME

HOW TO PLAY: Try to imagine the some of the greatest characters from some of the greatest series in Japan—namely *Cowboy Bebop*, *The Big O*, *Gundam Wing*, *Armored Trooper Votoms* and *Silent Mobius* among others—in one role-playing game, with tons of original animation and cutting-edge 2D graphics for combat. That game is *Sunrise World War*.

ANALYSIS: Count 'em: *World War* casts characters from 25 different studio Sunrise's anime series. Then they all fight! Want Roger Smith to hire out the Bebop crew to go catch Wu Fei? You can do it. This game is like an anime fan's dream come true...or it will be if Bandai Interactive brings it to America...

SUNRISE WORLD WAR

KEEP IT!

LET'S DO MARATHON (PS2)

RUNNING ON EMPTY

HOW TO PLAY: We hope developer Taito is in good shape, because then their game *Let's do Marathon with Naoko Takahashi* would be worth something. As Olympic Gold medalist runner Takahashi, you'll sprint you way to glory around a variety of Japan-based locales by frantically jerking the toggle stick on your PS2. If destroying your hand and Dual Shock controller isn't cool enough, you can oversee a whole gym of runners!

ANALYSIS: Running isn't fun to do in real life. Running in a videogame isn't that fun either. And if you're not simulating running, you're simulating...uh...telling people to run. Now that's what fun is all about! Maybe soon we can have a tooth-brushing sim!

MUST...HUFF...
GET...HAH...
TO...HELLO
KITTY SALE!

LET'S DO MARATHON

RELEASE SCHEDULE

WE PICK 'EM, YOU PLAY 'EM. HERE'S WHAT'S COMING SOON...

SEPTEMBER

BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG While the concept is a tad weird, goofy Billy Hatcher and his collection of giant eggs are actually quite cool. Dressed in a chicken costume (don't ask), you'll roll each of the yolky shells around a highly imaginative world, hatching them to unlock the magic inside. (Sega, GC)

BILLY HATCHER

BOKTAI *Metal Gear Solid* creator Hideo Kojima wants to make sure you play outside. That's why *Boktai* knows how light it is—and whether it's from sunlight or a lamp—while you control Django and fight a mess of vampires. You'll want make sure it's a sunny day when you battle some of these bosses! (Konami, GBA)

DDRMAX2 The revolution continues, and this time Konami wants even more folks in on the action. So besides the Japanese DDR favorites, they're making sure to get some big American dance hits too. (Konami, PS2)

DIGIMON BATTLE SPIRIT 2 The evil Kerpymon has disrupted the Digital World with his schemes, and it's up to you—and a whole horde of season four-era Digimon—to stop him. (Bandai, GBA)

DYNASTY TACTICS 2 *Tactics* pits the armies of feudal Japan against one another using a real-time strategy template. It's frantic, violent, and packed with tons of new features, including a new "tactical chain" system. (Koei, PS2)

DYNASTY TACTICS 2

FATAL FRAME 2: CRIMSON BUTTERFLY As if the camera-totting events of the first game weren't creepy enough, this second *Fatal Frame* presents an even more frightening ghost story. When twin sisters Mio and Mayu Amakura follow a mysterious, crimson butterfly into the woods, let's just say their sixth sense starts twitching uncontrollably. (Tecmo, PS2)

MONSTER RANCHER 4 A multi-breeding and training program, full customization of training facilities, and a brand new interactive action/adventure element round out this sequel's pluses. Oh, there are some curious new monsters, too. (Tecmo, PS2)

P.N. 03

P.N.03 In probably the strangest—and coolest—rhythm game to date, mercenary Vanessa Schneider is sent to obliterate the Computer Arms Management System after it goes completely haywire. *P.N.03* is pure action with a techno-thumping twist. The hot girl doesn't hurt either. (Capcom, GC)

SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4 Finally! It's the GBA-version of the original Nintendo's *Super Mario Bros. 3*! The numbers may be confusing, but don't be confused about this—*SMB3* was one of the best videogames ever made, as Mario had to switch costumes and powers and explore the wildest worlds to rescue the princes from King Koopa. (Nintendo, GBA)

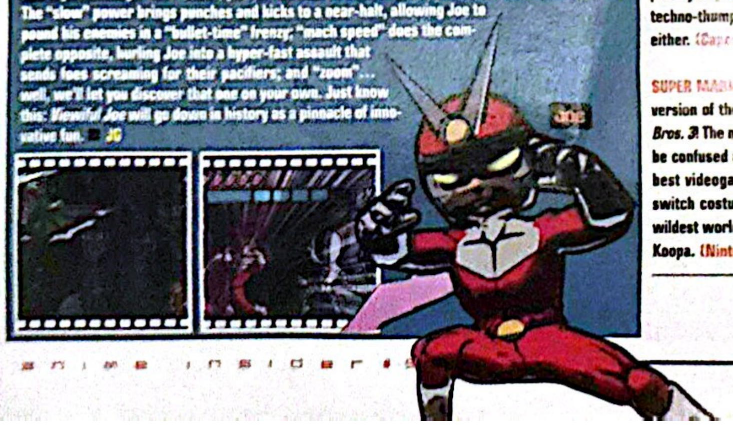
HOT PICK

VIEWTIFUL JOE

Due in October from Capcom on GameCube

Japan is no stranger to the weird and wacky. But for a game to be the perfect marriage between strange and stupendous is rare, for sure. *Viewtiful Joe* is just that, a cinematic farce that pits players in the high-octane action of a really odd sci-fi movie. Big-headed skeletons running rampant; overweight, spandex-clad superheroes fighting the forces of evil; inflated Hollywood egos—it's all here, and all outrageously cool.

At its core, the game is a new-age side-scroller with old-school roots. The graphics are red-hot—just like Joe's flamboyant, skin-tight suit—and manage to contain an impressive pseudo-3D aesthetic within an essentially 2D play area. In that unique, cel shaded world, Joe—a regular guy sucked into one of his favorite flicks to save his talkative girlie, Sylvia—fights baddies with remarkable style. Utilizing a "VFX" meter, you can set into a motion a variety of special effect fighting modes. The "slow" power brings punches and kicks to a near-halt, allowing Joe to pound his enemies in a "bullet-time" frenzy; "mach speed" does the complete opposite, hurling Joe into a hyper-fast assault that sends foes screaming for their pacifiers; and "zoom"... well, we'll let you discover that one on your own. Just know this: *Viewtiful Joe* will go down in history as a pinnacle of innovative fun. ■ JG



OCTOBER

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI The Z Fighters bring their brawl to Nintendoville to the delight of all. Pick over 20 characters and fight in Story Mode (from Raditz's arrival through the Cell Games), enter the World Tournament or just fight your friends! (Atari, GC)

FINAL FANTASY XI Although a massively-multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), Square Enix promises the same deep level of storytelling than has made *FF* so dang popular. Choose your race, look and more, then just try to save the huge world of Vana'diel! This release date is tentative. (Square Enix, PC)

GREGORY HORROR SHOW

GREGORY HORROR SHOW The visual style of this nightmare isn't the only thing that's weird. Based on an anime series of the same name, the entire goal is to get out of Gregory House by stealing the souls of its guests and...uh...peeping through keyholes. (Capcom, PS2)

HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE This latest installment brings over 40 new characters into the picture, and a new "event" system spanning over 30 years. That's right, you'll spend a lifetime raising livestock, picking corn, and more in this *Animal Crossing*-like sim. (Natsume, GC)

KIRBY'S AIR RIDE The creators of *Super Smash Bros.* bring Nintendo fans a rail-based *Mario Kart*. The controls are deceptively simple, using merely one button to control the high-speed antics as Kirby slips and slides his way through the universe. (Nintendo, GC)

LOWRIDER Even if you don't care about the street phenomenon, it's still quite a cool party game that begs players to bounce their vehicles as high as possible, twirl their tail ends, and honk 'n' grind down public streets in a parade of the absurd. (Jaleco, PS2)

MEGA MAN X7 Forget about *Mega Man Legends*. *X7* is the blue bomber's first adventure to do 3D properly. It jumps from old-school side-scrolling to new-school action-adventure, and there's even a new character added into the mix, Axl. (Capcom, PS2)

PIKMIN 2 Teaming up with all his plant pals from the original game—along with two new additions to the clan, a chunky purple Pikmin and a really creepy, thin, white one—Olimar and his assistant search out buried treasure. (Nintendo, GC)

SEGA GT ONLINE Over 165 cars are packed into this full-throttle racer. Tons of classic vehicles from the '50s and '60s dominate the garage, and with the added function of Xbox Live voice chat, you'll be able to trash your buddies 4,000 miles away. (Sega, Xbox)

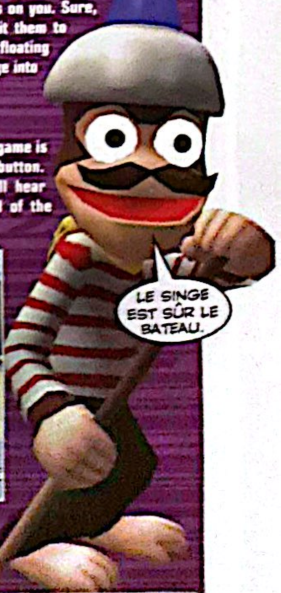
STEEL BATTALION: LINE OF CONTACT (Capcom, Xbox) You were probably just thinking to yourself that your $150 controller was getting a bit dusty. Enjoy more missions and features in the hyper-cool giant mech sim. ■ JG

HOT TIPS

FOR THE BEST GAMERS ONLY

APE ESCAPE 2 (PS2)

To fill your pockets with a max supply of 999 coins, go to the Simian Citadel after you've beaten the game once. But rather than netting the magician monkey, Tommy, let him unleash a horde of mouse thieves on you. Sure, they'll steal some coins, but if you hit them to regain your cash, the multipliers floating around you will turn that chump change into a hefty sum.

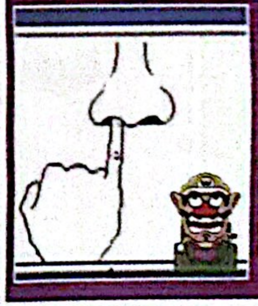

LE SINGE EST SÛR LE BATEAU.

JET GRIND RADIO (GBA)

Got an itchin' for old-school? As the game is booting up, keep tapping the "A" button. When the Sega logo appears, you'll hear the classic "Sega!" scream instead of the regular music.

TENCHU: WRATH OF HEAVEN (PS2)

Sure, it's only a game, but to access some funny makeshift outtakes, enter this sequence of commands when the title screen appears: Hold L1 and R2 while pressing down, square, up, square, right, square, left, and square. Scan through the chain of menu selections (options to audio to language) and the cut clips can be seen by clicking on "b-sides."



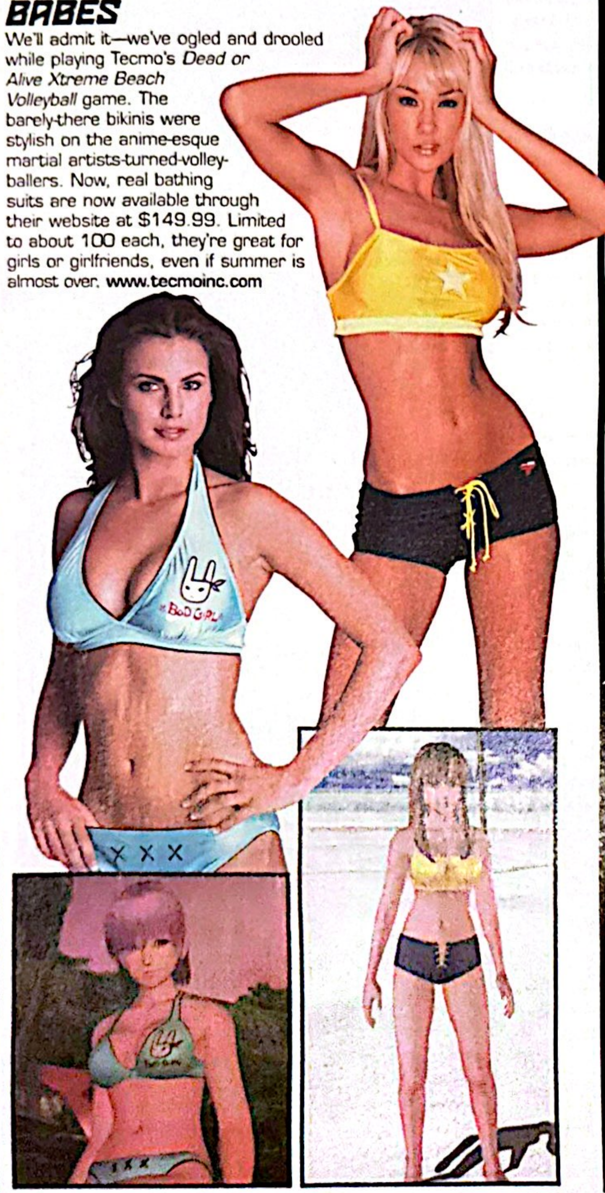
WARIO WARE, INC.: MEGA MICROGAMES (GBA)

The final, hidden mini-game, *Pyoro II*, can be unlocked by earning a flower medal in every micro-game in "Grid" mode. The finger pains are worth it. But no matter what Wario does, don't stick your finger in your nose. That's not cool at all. ■ JG

STUFF

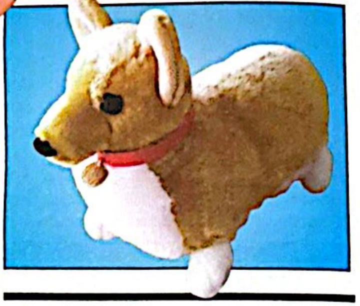
BIKINI BATTLIN' BABES

We'll admit it—we've ogled and drooled while playing Tecmo's *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball* game. The barely-there bikinis were stylish on the anime-esque martial artists-turned-volleyballers. Now, real bathing suits are now available through their website at $149.99. Limited to about 100 each, they're great for girls or girlfriends, even if summer is almost over. **www.tecmoinc.com**



WHO LET THE DOG OUT?

We love *Cowboy Bebop*, and more importantly, we love Ein. He's brilliant and irresistible. Why not pick up this fuzzy 11" Welsh corgi plush of Ein the data dog for $14.99? He may not say much, but he just might do your homework if you hug him hard enough. **www.bandai-ent.com**



BIG THINGS, LITTLE PACKAGES

Sure, they're usually 14 stories tall but when reduced to 3.5 inches, they can still pack a punch. Imported from Japan, Kaiyodo's *Neon Genesis Evangelion* Micro Action Figures are pre-assembled from the original Japanese gashapon and come with great accessories. With two versions of Rei Ayanami, two of Sachiel the Third Angel, and three versions of EVA-01, you can get them all for $3.99 each. **www.kaiyodo.co.jp**

MIGHTY MINI MECHA

Combine the mechanical coolness of robots and the cuteness factor of anything small, and you've got *Superior Defender* Action Figures! At $9 and with over 12 articulation points, and weapons and accessories at a bite-size 5" tall, you can make your own adventures, and cut your enemies down to size. **www.bandai.com**

WE DON'T NEED NO STINKING TOWEL!

Keitaro may not return her affection, but you'll love this *Love Hina* Mitsumi in Swimsuit Resin Statue. Tama the turtle is making off with her towel as she kneels on a sandy base in a hot little blue number, and at $149, that's a number collectors anywhere can appreciate. **www.tokyomint.com**

KAME CHAMELEON

Dragon Ball Z has conquered your life. Besides watching the anime and playing the videogames, you can accessorize *DBZ*-style too! Show your loyalty when carting around *DBZ:Budokai* and your PlayStation 2—even with a portable monitor and controllers—with the Nuby Kame Case, for a cheap $29.99! **www.dbzgamestuff.com**

HOT PICK!

DIGITAL DINO

Since looks are a big deal for computer peripherals, CharisMac's new FireWireDino is looking to stomp the competition. A four-port Firewire hub that stands at about 8" tall, this dino means business—its eyes and mouth light up when you plug things in! While it unfortunately is for Macs only and does not have its own power adapter or cables, at $69.95 this is a monster contender for coolest hub design ever. www.charismac.com

MASAMUNE'S METAL MAIDENS

Masamune Shirow's given us luscious babes and artwork in his cyberpunk manga and anime. Taken from his classic *Intron Depot* art books, Yamato Toy's division Alpha brings us his *Intron Depot* Mini-Figures, each at $5.99. Many of these women are familiar from his other works, but all of them are sure to please. **www.yamato-toys.com**

KITTY'S ALL GROWN UP

Admit it—you loved Hello Kitty when you were smaller. Now you're all grown up, you have to put those plush dolls away, right? Wrong! Sanrio's signature character is now available as Teen Angst Hello Kitty 6-Inch Plushies, each at $9.99. You can choose Punk, Goth, Pink Punk, and Purple Gothic characters, each of them already eyeing you disdainfully.
www.sanrio.com

COMING TO A TABLE NEAR YU

Now you, too, can join in Yusuke's spirit detective adventures with the *Yu Yu Hakusho* TCG, from Score Entertainment. Wield Spirit Energy and attack in groups or on your own against huge odds—just like the TV show! Starter decks are at $10.99 and individual packs cost $2.99.
www.YuYuTCG.com

FERVOR OF FURY
RANDO

A REASON TO HIT THE BOOKS

Onegai Teacher's full of touching moments. Now you can pick up these two books—one's a full-length novel adaptation for only $7.95, and another's an official fanbook, full of glorious images, for $17.95—and make every day a study session actually worth going to.
www.comicsone.com

ONEGAI TEACHER

STICK IT TO THE... ER, BOY

Despite the Game Boy Advance SP's small size and convenient flip-up lid, it doesn't have that familiar joystick-feel. Thank goodness for Nubytech's Grip and Stick for Game Boy Advance SP. At a measly $10, they've solved all our gamer gripes and let us get back to gaming already.
www.nubytech.net

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ASS-TRO BOY

We have no idea what the storyline could have inspired this *Astro Boy* figurine, but concerned readers are reminded that Astro's rear end is indeed equipped with machine guns with which to defend himself.

FRENCH KISS

Medicom Toy's Kubricks show up on this list so often, they probably deserve a column of their own. This *Amelie* boxed set is based on the 2001 French film, which had its fair share of fanfare though we doubt much of it came from action figure collectors. Comes with garden gnome and Jerry Lewis.

A CALL TO ARMS

It's a very rare event when a dismembered mutant arm has much play value, but this backscratcher based on the *Project Arms* series is, uh, well...no exception, actually.

SOCK IT TO ME?

Japanese television's most notorious 5-year old, Crayon Shinchan, comes to life in these darling socks of illegal Korean manufacture. Given that Crayon's father on the show is himself infamous for his smelly socks, it's surprising the Japanese didn't think of the idea first.

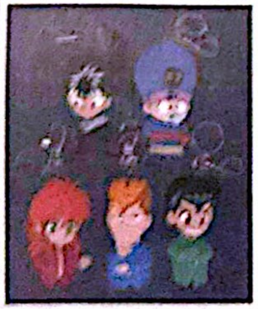
CATS ON THE BRAIN

Danboru-kun is the star of a recent line of Japanese picture books. If we could read them, we'd be able to tell you why he's got a cardboard box for a head—or why there's a leaf-shaped cat stuck inside.

■ KUMAR SIVASUBRAMANIAN

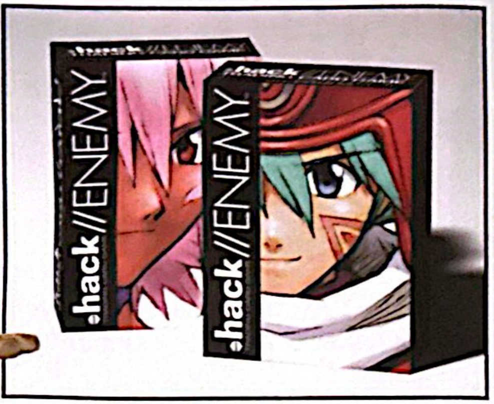
HAKUSHO ON THE GO

Yu Yu Hakusho's quickly become a hit on Toonami with its supernaturally good story. We're always in favor of showing support for favorite characters or series wherever we go—especially with these *Yu Yu Hakusho* key chains! From Great Eastern, each one sports a different character in SD, from Yusuke, Koenma, Kurama, Kuwabara, and Hiei, and is in relief at $4.50 each!



COME PLAY MY GAME

Now The World is in your hands with the *.hack//ENEMY* trading card game! Based in the same world and storyline, you try to accumulate Victory Points while leveling up your abilities. Starter decks include a play mat and rule book for $11.99; choose from Black Rose or Kite. Booster packs are $3.29. **www.decipher.com**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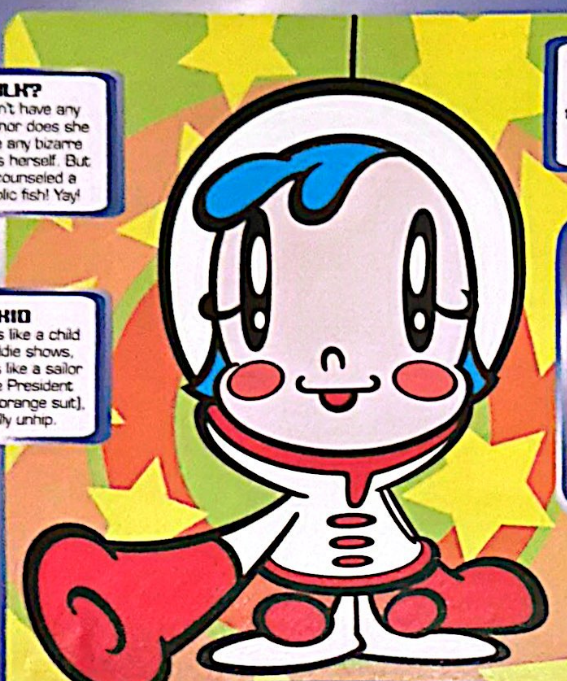
BY REBECCA BUNDY

INSIDER PROFILE

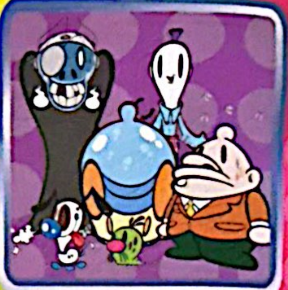
SUPER MILK-CHAN



GOT MILK?
Milk-chan doesn't have any special abilities, nor does she ever really solve any bizarre planetary threats herself. But one time she counseled a group of alcoholic fish! Yay!

COOL KID
Though she looks like a child and watches kiddie shows, Milk-chan swears like a sailor at her boss, the President (that's him in the orange suit), for being totally unhip.

HIGH FINANCE
Milk-chan has lost millions in the stock market, charged things without paying the credit card bills, and has dodged paying rent for six months!



WIRED HELP
The blue bottle-shaped robot is Milk-chan's robot servant Tetsuko, who dreams of an ideal husband and helps get rid of the annoying, white-faced landlord (above left).

SPIES LIKE US
Milk-chan's allies include the little white and red Robodog, who can sniff out anything, and Dr. Eyepatch, a mysterious, dark-suited apparition who advises her via video clips

ORIGIN: Sweet-looking Milk-chan is just your average little child heroine who enjoys goofing off, watching TV, and keeping up with the latest fashions. Sure, she's terrible with money, but the insecure President believes in her enough (or is stupid enough) to call on her when crises arise! She's always up to the challenge (unless her landlord is yelling at her about the rent), but it's usually up to the mustachioed booger Hanage, and robots Robodog and Tetsuko to save the day. Once the world is safe, it's sushi for everyone!

Did we mention the insect family living in the yard? And their domestic problems? No? Too bad.

NOW APPEARING: A bizarre cross between *Powerpuff Girls* and *Ren & Stimpy*, *Super Milk-Chan* has been taking parody to new extremes in Japan since 1998. Designed to keep the viewer off-guard, the art style might suddenly change for an episode, or they'll have cameos of other anime characters, or even shots of the sound-effects guys at work. It's so strange that it had to become a cult favorite.

ADV Films has the rights to the two series, *Super Milk-Chan* and the sequel *Oh, Super Milk-Chan*, the first of which is coming to DVD starting October 14. Before you watch it, take a deep breath and get ready for unique craziness!

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